



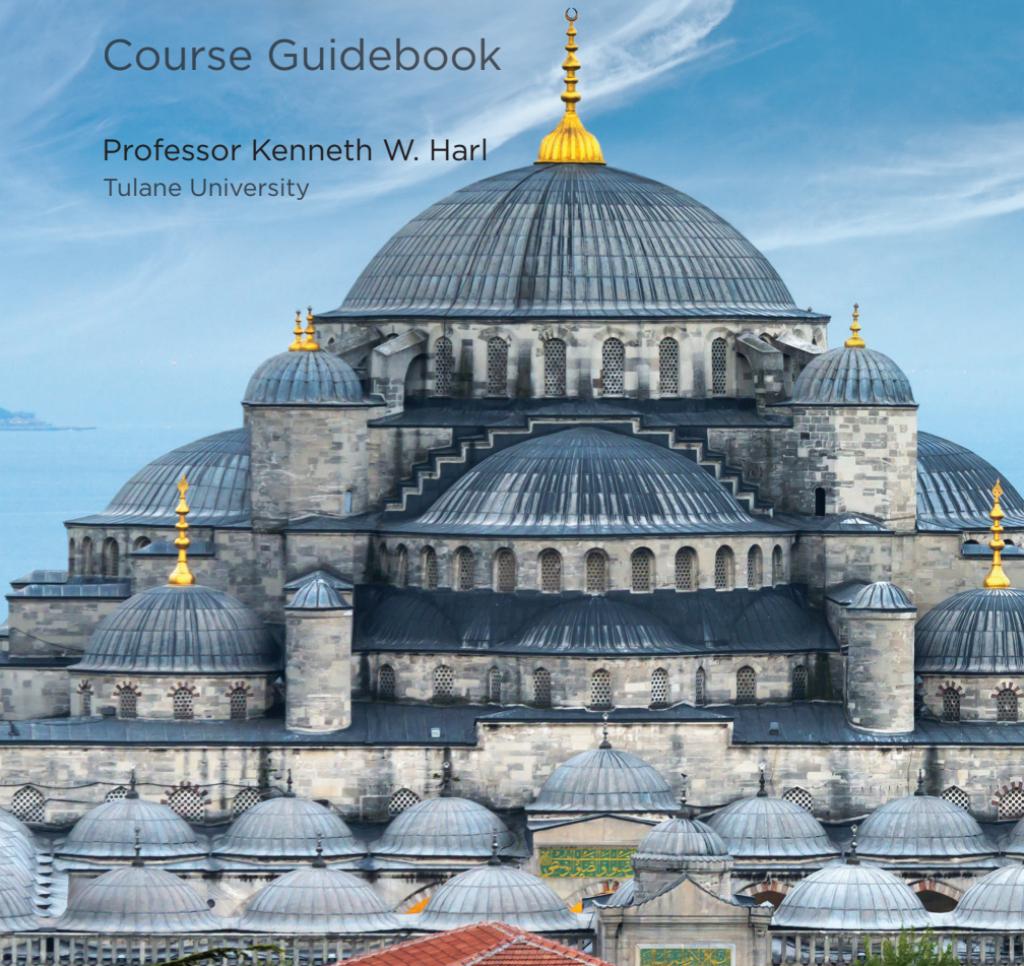
Topic
History

Subtopic
Ancient History

The Ottoman Empire

Course Guidebook

Professor Kenneth W. Harl
Tulane University



PUBLISHED BY:

THE GREAT COURSES
Corporate Headquarters
4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 500
Chantilly, Virginia 20151-2299
Phone: 1-800-832-2412
Fax: 703-378-3819
www.thegreatcourses.com

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Kenneth W. Harl, Ph.D.

Professor of Classical and Byzantine History
Tulane University

Kenneth W. Harl is Professor of Classical and Byzantine History at Tulane University, where he has taught since 1978. He earned his B.A. from Trinity College and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University.

Professor Harl teaches courses in Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Viking, and Crusader history from freshman to graduate levels. A recognized scholar of coins and classical Anatolia, he has taken students to Turkey

on excursions and as assistants on excavations of Hellenistic and Roman sites. He now regularly lectures on academic tours to Scandinavia, Iceland, and Turkey offered by Archaeological Tours.

Professor Harl has published numerous articles on numismatics and ancient history. He is the author of *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180–275* and *Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700*. His current work includes publishing the coin discoveries from the excavation of Gordion, Turkey; a new book on Rome and its Iranian foes; and a revised edition of *Coinage in the Roman Economy*.

Professor Harl has served on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Archaeology*, and he lectures nationally for the Archaeological Institute of America. He is a fellow, trustee, and academic vice president of the American Numismatic Society.

Professor Harl has twice received Tulane's Sheldon Hackney Award for Excellence in Teaching (voted on by both faculty and students) and has received the Student Body Award for Excellence in Teaching on multiple occasions. He was also the recipient of Baylor University's nationwide Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching. In 2007, he was the Lewis P. Jones Visiting Professor in History at Wofford College.

Professor Harl's other Great Courses include *Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Empire*, *The Fall of the Pagans and the Origins of Medieval Christianity*, *The Era of the Crusades*, *Origins of Great Ancient Civilizations*, *The World of Byzantium*, *Great Ancient Civilizations of Asia Minor*, *Rome and the Barbarians*, *The Peloponnesian War*, *The Vikings*, and *The Barbarian Empires of the Steppes*. ■

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The Ottoman Empire

From 1520 to 1566, the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent ruled one of the greatest Muslim states, an empire that included all the historic cities of Islam. Suleiman's empire—the Sublime Porte, as it was called by Westerners—was a great world power, famed for its Janissaries, cavalry, and siege guns. Constantinople, now known as Istanbul, emerged as Islam's cultural capital, defining religion, aesthetics, and letters. Suleiman's architects redefined Islamic architecture, creating a skyline of mosques that set the standard for cities of the Middle East. Yet Ottoman power was hardly ordained.

This course begins with the kaleidoscopic history of the Seljuk Turks, who built the first Muslim civilization in Asia Minor in the 11th and 12th centuries; the destructive Mongol invasions; and the unexpected emergence of the Ottoman sultans as heirs to Byzantium and the Abbasid caliphate under Mehmet the Conqueror and Selim the Grim in the 15th and 16th centuries. Stress is given to the achievements of high Ottoman civilization, imperial institutions, and great wars waged by sultans against the Habsburgs of Europe and the shahs of Iran. The latter wars, between Ottoman sultans and Iranian shahs, sharpened the divide between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam, thereby dictating allegiances across the Middle East to this day.

Just as remarkable was the rapid imperial decline starting in the 18th century. This decline resulted not just from lurid harem politics of Topkapi, but from far more important fiscal and economic weaknesses and a failure to keep pace with military and technological changes in the West. In response to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 to 1799, Sultan Selim III launched the first of a series of modern reforms. Reformers laid the groundwork for the future Turkish Republic, but their emphasis on modernization ironically undermined the traditional, multinational

Ottoman Empire. The failure of the revolution of the Young Turks, along with military defeats in 1911 to 1914, deeply divided Ottoman society along ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines, leading to outbreaks of violence among Muslims and Christians. The Ottoman Empire thus fragmented under the impact of World War I.

In 1919 to 1925, in the aftermath of Ottoman defeat, Kemal Atatürk created the first modern Muslim nation-state—the Turkish Republic—which is still strategic to the Middle East today. Atatürk also abolished the caliphate, however, and this action has ever since posed a crisis of religious and political authority within the Islamic world. This course concludes with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, demonstrating how it still influences the geopolitics and religious culture of the Middle East today.

Sublime Porte: Visions of the Ottoman Empire

This course examines the origins, achievements, and collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which was established in the 14th century and endured until the early 20th century. At its height, the empire covered more than 1 million square miles of territory, its tens of millions of subjects spread across three continents. This lecture provides an overview of the topics that will be covered in the course.

A BROAD VISION

- ◆ This course deals not only with the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, but also with the misconceptions and visions—some hostile, others romantic—that have influenced Western understanding of the modern Middle East. The course will thus be more than just an account of the Ottoman Empire as the prelude to the modern Turkish Republic.
- ◆ The beginning of the course will narrate the origins of the early Ottoman Empire through the time of Suleiman the Magnificent, whose reign is hailed as the apex of Ottoman power. From the founding of the empire by Osman I to the reign of Suleiman, this period represented a succession of extraordinarily able rulers seldom equaled by other dynasties.
- ◆ Although several of Suleiman's immediate heirs were disappointing, the Janissaries, ulema, and secretarial staff in Constantinople—the Sublime Porte—maintained the empire. We will also discuss the

capable sultans who rose to power during this period, including Osman II and Murat IV. We will then shift our focus to the institutions and society of the high Ottoman Empire, a classical age spanning two centuries, from 1453 to 1699.

- ◆ The sheer size, diversity, and prosperity of the Ottoman Empire still amazes us. In the last 40 years, it has generated an impressive scholarship on social life and the imperial economy. Both Western and Turkish scholars of the last generation have engaged in exciting work on the vitality and originality of Ottoman civilization, studying subjects ranging from miniature manuscript painting and the importance of endowments to reconstruction of life in Ottoman towns during the 18th century.
- ◆ As we continue our examination of the Ottoman Empire, we will examine in more detail the relations between the Ottomans and their neighbors during the classical age. This age corresponds to the early modern period of European history, when national monarchies, overseas colonization, and an oceanic world economy came to threaten the traditional Ottoman order.
- ◆ As we approach the end of the course, we will consider the decline, reform, and collapse of the empire, a sequence of events that began in the late 17th century. It's all too easy to explain the empire's decline as the result of vicious, cruel sultans, lurid harem politics, and Janissaries amok in the capital. These familiar images of Ottoman decadence have their place, but more recent scholarship, much of which focuses on the successes of the late Ottoman Empire, makes it clear that the empire's decline was hardly inevitable.
- ◆ The course will conclude with an examination of World War I, focusing in particular on the consequences of the Ottoman Empire's collapse. The legacy of World War I can be seen in the events of World War II, the Cold War, and the decades-long conflict in the Middle East that continues to this day.



Suleiman the Magnificent
(1494–1566)

OTTOMAN IMPERIAL ACHIEVEMENT

- ◆ The brilliance of the Ottoman imperial achievement is best appreciated by comparisons to the other two so-called Islamic gunpowder empires: Safavid Iran and Mughal India. From 1517 on, the Ottoman sultan ruled as caliph of Sunni Islam, and in contrast to both the Safavids and Mughals, he ruled according to the traditions of the Koran and *Şeriat* (Arabic *Shar'ia*).
- ◆ Mehmet II forged the imperial order, dividing society into the *askeri* (soldiers, officials, and servants of the sultan) and the *reaya*, those who supported the *askeri*. The second category was, in turn, divided into Muslims and *dhimmi*, those nonbelievers (Christians and Jews) protected in the Koran as “peoples of the book.”
- ◆ Foremost, the Ottoman state rested on the talents and loyalty of the sultan’s slaves, long recruited from the Christian populations of the Balkans and Anatolia by periodic levy, or *devşirme*. The selected boys, usually between the ages of 13 and 16, were converted to Islam and admitted by a grand ceremony of circumcision (*sünnet*) that has influenced the ceremony of manhood of Muslim boys today. The brightest of the *devşirme* were destined for the best education at the palace of Topkapı, so they could rise to become the sultan’s generals and ministers.
- ◆ The Ottoman sultans refined an earlier Islamic tradition of recruiting bodyguards of slaves (*ghulam* or *Mamluk*) into the means of staffing the imperial administration and elite infantry. Through slavery, Ottoman sultans drew upon and assimilated the most talented of their conquered subjects so that loyalty to the sultan and the Muslim faith, rather than descent, was the crucial qualification for imperial service.

Scholars of the Islamic world have long cautioned about Western perceptions of Orientalism.

CRUCIAL THEMES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

- ◆ There are several crucial themes that need to be considered in the study of the Ottoman Empire, which on first glance is a disconcerting picture of the exotic and romantic and, at times, a misleading familiar.
- ◆ Scholars of the Islamic world have long cautioned about Western perceptions of Orientalism, the distorting lens through which Islamic civilization is judged. Orientalism has its origins in the Crusades ever since Pope Urban II roused Christian Europe to holy war by the first images of "Turkish atrocities" committed against eastern Christians.
- ◆ From the start, Christians long had difficulty in understanding Islam as an independent religion of Abraham rather than a later Arian heresy. The Ottoman Empire by its very success added aroused fears and curiosity among Europeans.
- ◆ The awesome power of the Ottoman sultans was expressed by the phrase "Sublime Porte," denoting the high gate (*Bab-i Ali*) within Topkapı where the sultan or his vizier received foreign dignitaries. The term was first used by emissaries of King Francis I when they entered the Topkapı to seal an alliance with Sultan Suleiman against the Holy Roman emperor Charles V in 1536. Thereafter, Sublime Porte designated the imperial government of the Ottoman state.
- ◆ More commonly, the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran were merged by European travelers and philosophes into an eternal, unchanging world of Orient or Near East and therefore provided a setting for the exotic and fantastic.
- ◆ These images are well seen in the *Persian Letters* of Montesquieu, who employs the conceit of letters by Muslim Persians to comment on contemporary Parisian society. Mozart brilliantly adapted these images of Orientalism in his 1782 opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Il Seraglio*). Even today, this perception survives in such

expressions as "Ottoman" to designate plush, luxurious furniture or the candy "Turkish delight."

- ◆ Modern Turkish pulp fiction and historical movies have contributed to this heady brew of positive images of Ottoman grandeur as the backdrop for historical soap operas of romance and high adventure. The most successful has been the four-season television spectacle *The Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*), which aired from 2011 to 2014.
- ◆ Yet it is important to note that the very term "Ottoman Empire" is a modern Western invention; the term is as misleading as the term "Byzantine Empire" is for the Eastern Roman Empire. Sultans and their servants designated themselves Osmali, or descendants of Osman, the founder of the dynasty, so the term carried no ethnic designation. Western Europeans called the Ottomans "Turks" and used the phrase "to turn Turk" to denote a conversion to Islam.
- ◆ Instead, the Ottoman sultans ruled over "the peoples of Islam" (Dar al-Islam) and the subjected dhimmi, protected communities of nonbelievers. Beginning with Selim Yavuz, they styled themselves as padishah and caliph, piously bound by the strictures of Islam to rule as the heirs of the Abbasid caliphs.
- ◆ In the 19th century, the image of the Sublime Porte gave way to that of the Ottoman Empire as the "sick man of Europe," a decrepit empire inviting partition by the great European powers. Tsar Nicholas I was credited with coining the phrase in a series of confidential letters exchanged with British ambassador Sir George Hamilton Seymour in 1853.
- ◆ The phrase is actually a paraphrase rather than a quote, but it captured the opinion of the Concert of European powers that the Eastern Question was a matter not of if the Ottoman Empire would fall, but rather how it could be partitioned. Perceptions of an Ottoman decrepit empire date from writings of the philosophes, writing in the mid-18th century.

- ◆ Catherine the Great decisively defeated the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War and raised for the first time the possibility of a Russian conquest of Constantinople and the Straits. On July 21, 1798, Napoleon defeated the Mamluks, vassals of Sultan Selim III, at the Battle of the Pyramids—a victory that stunned the sultan into reform.
- ◆ Russian and French successes over the Ottomans compelled Great Britain to counter and therefore preserve the balance of power. The Ottoman sultans, and later reforms of Tanzimat, and the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (misnamed the Young Turks) responded to this image in their efforts to modernize and preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ In assessing long-held Western perceptions for the Ottoman Empire, it will be necessary to keep in mind several important themes.
- ◆ First, the Ottoman sultans succeeded in ruling a vast multinational empire for so long because they dexterously balanced their demands to maintain their central power with the interests of the

Battle of Pyramids



local elites in the provinces and the frontiers. Since the 14th century, successive sultans had co-opted sundry local elites in frontier zones, in the Balkans, in the lands of the Caucasus, and the Arab lands. Ultimately, it was the loss of these borderlands in the 18th and 19th centuries that reduced Ottoman power.

- ◆ Another important theme is the central role of Islam as the faith of the sultan and the majority of his subjects and as a great cultural force. The cultural role is best seen in how Suleiman the Magnificent transformed Byzantine Constantinople into Turkish Istanbul. The cultural power of Islam in the Middle East today, as well as the identification of Muslims with the faith, owes much to the Sunni Islam championed by the Ottoman sultans.
- ◆ Finally, there is the decisive role of the Turks, originally a nomadic people of the Eurasian Steppes, who carved out military border states in Anatolia that became the heartland of the Ottoman Empire. It will become clear how remarkably receptive the Turks have been in keeping their own identity while embracing Islam and adapting the institutions of neighbors and subjects.
- ◆ Foremost, the Turkish conquerors assimilated so many of the conquered, and this success bears comparison to that of imperial Rome. While Rome assimilated the defeated by granting political and legal rights, the Turks did so by promoting loyalty to the sultan and the power of Islam.
- ◆ Furthermore, the Turks adapted inherited institutions and therefore founded one of the most successful military states that maintained its dominance well into the 18th century. Although at a high price, the Ottoman army made a formidable comeback in World War I so that it was by far the best ally of Germany, and this explains why Hitler so desperately wanted to lure Turkey into the war against the Soviet Union.

- ◆ In understanding the Ottoman Empire, and what it means to us today, we must account for these distorting images of Orientalism. All of us in the present, when confronting the future, look back to the past; for the peoples of the Middle East, their immediate past was the Ottoman Empire.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways was the Ottoman Empire and its civilization the culmination of classical Islam? In what ways did the Ottomans adapt their cultural and institutional heritage to forge a successful world power for two centuries? Why did efforts to reform state and society after the “auspicious event” on June 15, 1826, fail?
2. How telling have been Western images of the Ottoman Empire as the Sublime Porte or the “sick man of Europe”? What are the best ways of appreciating the Ottoman achievements?

SUGGESTED READING

Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and the Islamic Tradition*.

Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*.

Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor

In this lecture, you will learn about the origins of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottomans saw themselves as the heirs of the Seljuk Turks, a group of nomads from the Central Asian Steppe who migrated to Asia Minor in the 11th century and adopted the region—the heartland of the future Ottoman state—as their home. Ottoman sultans ruling centuries later remained conscious of the substantial debt they owed to the Seljuks.

THE SELJUK TURKS

- ◆ Turkish-speaking peoples first arrived in Asia Minor when, over the course of 200 years, 500,000 Turkish-speaking nomads settled in the area. Within a few centuries, the Turkish-speakers had assimilated the vast majority of the region's native population, Christians who spoke either Greek or Armenian.
- ◆ The ancestor of the Seljuk Turks was a man named Seljuk. Seljuk's grandfather had led an earlier group of Turks, known as the Oghuz, to the Jaxartes valley. There, the Oghuz Turks established an important merchant community known as Yangi-Kent.
- ◆ The Oghuz Turks bred camels and horses, which were very important for the caravan trade. They also had a reputation for being spectacular warriors. Few cavalry forces could stand up to the classic nomadic horse archer, and the Oghuz Turks were among the best. Their skills in battle recommended them as allies and mercenaries to the competing Islamic states in what are now Iran and central Asia.

- ◆ One of two leading states at the time was the Ghaznavid Empire, which was ruled from 997 to approximately 1030 by a man named Mahmud. Mahmud had money to spend, having plundered Hindu and Buddhist temples on his excursions to India. The Ghaznavids' opponents were the Karakhanids, who ruled the lands north of the Jaxartes River. The Ghaznavids and Karakhanids fought for control of cities along major caravan routes and authority over the Abbasid caliph, the leader of Sunni Islam. The Oghuz and other Turkish tribes, with their impressive cavalry, were extremely useful allies during this war.
- ◆ The Oghuz were ruled for a time by two brothers, Tughril Beg and Chagri Beg, who changed allegiances frequently in the wars between the Ghaznavids and Karakhanids. The brothers eventually settled down in Khorasan, a vital section of northeastern Iran, and went into business for themselves. They seized the caravan city of Nishapur, which was home to a number of Iranian-speaking merchants. In Nishapur, the Oghuz were seen as Sunni warriors, barbarians from the Steppes who rode horses and wore trousers. But they were still Muslims, and that fact allowed them to come to terms with the civilized elites of eastern Iran.
- ◆ Mahmud's successor, his son Mas'ud, had no choice but to fight the Oghuz Turks for control of key caravan cities. The decisive battle in a series of complicated wars between the Ghaznavids and the Oghuz—who were now known as the Seljuks—was fought near Merv in 1040. The Seljuks emerged victorious.
- ◆ One by one, the cities of Iran and central Asia fell to the Seljuks. The strict discipline imposed on tribal regiments by the Seljuks won them the support of the Iranian ruling class and led to a symbiosis that would persist through the whole of the Ottoman period. In the 1040s and early 1050s, Seljuk Turks steadily conquered a series of lesser cities. In 1055, they took control of Baghdad.

- ◆ In Baghdad, the Seljuks found themselves saddled with a very dangerous opponent to the west: Egypt. The rulers of Egypt were the Fatimids, an Alawite caliphate based in Cairo since 969. The Fatimids also held the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. By taking Baghdad, the Seljuks had committed themselves to fight the Fatimids for control of the Fertile Crescent.

FIGHTING THE BYZANTINES

- ◆ An early concern of the Seljuks was the Fatimids' alliance with the Byzantine Empire. To distract the Byzantines from assisting the Fatimids, the Seljuks sent tribal regiments to raid Byzantine settlements in Asia Minor. This tactic had additional benefits: Frequent raids kept tribal regiments active and disciplined, and they limited the amount of trouble the regiments could get into in Baghdad and other Seljuk-controlled cities.
- ◆ The Seljuk raiding parties found a hopelessly confused Byzantine state. Since the death of Byzantine emperor Basil II in 1025, control of the Byzantine Empire had been torn between a civil and bureaucratic aristocracy, and the Byzantine dynasty ended in approximately 1056. As a result, Turkish tribes entering Asia Minor found very little resistance and were able to raid at will across Armenia and central Asia.
- ◆ More importantly, the Seljuk raiding parties learned the routes in and out of Asia Minor. In 1064, they seized the cities of Ani and Kars. In central Asia Minor, the Seljuks discovered a landscape very similar to their ancestral homeland on the Eurasian Steppes. It was an area the Turks knew they could colonize and exploit.
- ◆ Seljuk attacks in Asia Minor increased in intensity over the next several decades. Tughril Beg was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan, and he continued to direct Seljuk regiments toward Byzantine settlements. The Byzantine ruling class was soon fed up with

their ineffective government. In 1068, they put a general named Romanus IV Diogenes on the throne. His job was to halt the Turkish attacks and restore Byzantine holdings in Asia Minor.

- ◆ Romanus waged several campaigns in what would later become the eastern sections of the Ottoman Empire, but his efforts proved inconclusive. In 1071, he raised an enormous mercenary army and marched east to Manzikert, a strategic fortress in what is now eastern Turkey. From there, Romanus and his army would be able to monitor Seljuk movements to the east and close invasion routes into Asia Minor.
- ◆ When he learned of Romanus's movements, Alp Arslan quickly redeployed his army to Manzikert. A great battle was fought between the two forces on August 19, 1071. Over the course of the day, the Seljuks wore down the much larger Byzantine army with classic skirmish tactics, winning a stunning victory. Romanus was captured. Alp Arslan, somewhat embarrassed by the extent of his victory, released the emperor. Having defeated the Byzantines, the Seljuks' road to Cairo was clear.



- ◆ Over the next 10 years, the Byzantine state descended even further into chaos. A series of civil wars ensued, with some Byzantines even hiring bands of Seljuk Turks to fight for them. Some Turkish mercenaries went in to business for themselves and began seizing control of Byzantine cities.
- ◆ A number of Turkish states emerged in Anatolia, ruled by men with only vague loyalties to the sultan in Baghdad. These leaders created their own independent sultanates and emirates. The most important of these was centered around the city of Konya, where a man named Suleiman seized power.

THE CRUSADES BEGIN

- ◆ In 1081, Alexius I became the new Byzantine emperor. It was Alexius who first turned to western Europeans—to Pope Urban II—to advocate for a crusade against the Turks in Asia Minor. The pope, conjuring up images of Turkish atrocities, preached a crusade to liberate Jerusalem from the infidels.
- ◆ Alexius's reasons for looking to western Europe for help were more economic than religious. Constant fighting among the Seljuks, Fatimids, and Byzantines had disrupted commerce along pilgrimage routes that western Europeans used to travel to the Holy Land. Many pilgrims were forced to turn back without ever reaching Jerusalem—a fact Alexius probably highlighted in his exchanges with the pope.
- ◆ Alexius and his successors wanted to use western Europeans as mercenaries to reconquer Asia Minor. What they didn't bank on, however, were huge western European armies with an independent aim of their own—to take

A number of Turkish states emerged in Anatolia, ruled by men with only vague loyalties to the sultan in Baghdad.

Jerusalem. As a result, the early crusades lent only a certain amount of help to the Byzantine emperors as they battled their way across Asia Minor toward the Holy Land.

- ◆ At Dorylaeum in 1097, the Seljuk sultan of Konya suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the crusaders. The sultan learned quickly to avoid the charges of the Europeans' heavy cavalry. The crusaders occupied Konya, and the Turks fled east to bide their time until the crusaders continued their journey toward Jerusalem.
- ◆ From 1097 to 1176, the Byzantines and Turks fought a series of desultory frontier wars. The wars led to increasing devastation throughout the region—cisterns broke down, roads and bridges were not repaired, and urban life deteriorated—turning the landscape of Asia Minor into a terrain more conducive to the Turkish way of life.
- ◆ The frontier wars also resulted in the repeated sacking of churches and monasteries, which would play a big role in the eventual religious transformation of Asia Minor. By 1200, Christian under Turkish rule had almost no clergy to assist them in maintaining their Christian faith, and many converted to Islam.
- ◆ Until at least the early 13th century, the Seljuks were entranced by the image of imperial Rome. Constantinople was still the fabled city, the one destined to be captured as foretold in the Quran. There were constant missions and exchanges between the two cultures. Through it all, however, the Seljuks maintained their sense of Turkish identity.
- ◆ In 1204, members of the Fourth Crusade who had pledged to restore Jerusalem instead stormed and sacked Constantinople. Byzantine power was shattered, and the situation of the Turks in Asia Minor changed drastically. The sultans of Konya were about to step out of Byzantium's shadow.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How much did Seljuk success depend on Tughril Bey? Why were they so readily accepted as defenders of Sunni Islam? Why did the occupation of Baghdad pose a crisis of policy for Tughril Bey and his successors?
2. How important were the Battle of Manziket in 1071 and Myriocephalon in 1176? Why did the Seljuk Turks succeed in establishing effective states and societies in Anatolia? How did the crusaders contribute to the success of the Seljuk Turks?

SUGGESTED READING

Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran*.

Cahn, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*.

The Islamization of Asia Minor

The 13th century witnessed two important developments in Asia Minor. First, the Seljuk sultans of Konya forged the region's first effective Islamic state. Second, Asia Minor gradually became Islamized, affecting the region's languages, visual arts, and urban patterns, and—most notably—transforming local Christians into Muslim Turks.

AN ISLAMIC STATE

- ◆ With the sack of Constantinople in 1024, the Seljuk sultans of Konya were in an ideal position to expand. They gained important access to ports, particularly the city of Alanya on the Mediterranean Sea. They also seized control of Sinop, which later became a major Ottoman naval base on the Black Sea.
- ◆ Beginning with Kaykhusraw I, later Seljuk sultans made tremendous efforts to unify the various states in Asia Minor under their authority. In addition to occupying crucial cities, they imposed their authority on tribes dwelling east of the Euphrates—tribes that were vital for military recruits. By 1225, there was an effective Turkish state in Asia Minor, despite the fact that the Byzantines retain controlled of certain western cities.
- ◆ These later Seljuk sultans did more than just expand territorially. They labored to create a true Islamic kingdom. They invited Persian

officials and religious figures, particularly Sufi mystics and learned members of madrassas, to relocate to Asia Minor from Iran. The Seljuk sultans were great patrons of Islamic theologians, and they employed Persian staff to run their incipient state. They also made use of former Byzantine officials, and some members of the old imperial family even embraced Islam.

- ◆ The Seljuk sultanate soon assumed the character of eastern Islamic states such as Iran and Transoxiana. Many of the sultanate's artisans were Turks, Greeks, and Armenians, but the sultans also invited artisans from Syria, Iraq, and eastern Iran to create a new set of visual arts.
- ◆ Seljuk sultans were also important to the development of the Silk Road. Kayqubad I, who ruled from 1219 to 1236, issued the first substantial Islamic coinage in Asia Minor, displacing the Byzantine coinage in circulation prior to his reign. Unlike Byzantine coinage, which was made out of gold and copper, Islamic coinage relied primarily on silver. This change resulted in closer ties with the wider Islamic world, linking the monetary and banking systems of Asia Minor with those in Baghdad, Damascus, and the caravan cities along the Silk Road.
- ◆ Konya soon became a leading destination for many of the caravans heading west toward Iran, and the Seljuk Turkish sultans were extremely adept in courting these various merchants. The Seljuks encouraged the merchants to settle down, which left an Islamic imprint on Konya and other cities along the Silk Road. The merchants established banking systems in their new homes, and they encouraged guilds and other specialists throughout the Islamic world to come and provide for the needs of a new urban population.

The Seljuk sultanate soon assumed the character of eastern Islamic states such as Iran and Transoxiana.

RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

- ◆ The Seljuk sultans were extremely pious, and they took the first significant steps in changing the cities of Asia Minor from Byzantine cities into Muslim cities. Major building activity beginning in the 1220s and continuing into the early 14th century completely transformed the urban landscape of cities in central and eastern Asia Minor.
- ◆ The Seljuk Turks favored a rectilinear design for their mosques. These long mosques faced Mecca and were better suited for prayer than the square-domed mosques that later came to dominate Ottoman architecture. The Seljuks based their rectilinear design on a mosque built by the Umayyads in Damascus, which was in turn based on Roman basilican churches of the 4th and 5th centuries. As the first significant construction in the region for more than 125 years, the mosques built by the Seljuks were just as important to the Islamization of Asia Minor as caravans, coinage, and new artistic styles.
- ◆ More important than even the mosques were the madrassas. Sometimes likened to Christian monasteries, madrassas were institutions where the various Muslim theological schools could debate. Madrassas often had libraries and observatories, and they were constructed around large courtyards representing paradise.
- ◆ As the number of Muslim building projects increased, minarets decorated in porcelain and brick came to dominate the landscape of Anatolian cities, where before the spires of churches had predominated. This architectural shift inspired many Christians to come in and examine the new buildings, and in some cases contributed to Christians' eventual conversion to Islam.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL UNITY

- ◆ After unification of Asia Minor under the Seljuks, Turkish became the common language for daily activities. Christians were forced to

use the language to negotiate with their masters and to deal with nomads who settled in their vicinity. Christians also acquired certain features of Turkish life during this time, including Turkish artistic styles, Turkish approaches to decorating, and Turkish clothing. In daily life, Christians came to resemble the Turks more than their they did their Byzantine ancestors.

- ◆ The cultural unity of Asia Minor during this period turned out to be more important in the long run than the sultans' inability to maintain political unity in the region, which was largely due to outside forces that they could not have foreseen. Kaykhusraw II, for example, moved beyond his holdings in Erzurum, a city in eastern Turkey, and seized control of Konya and Kayseri from his brother. His rule was resented, a fact that ultimately led to a rebellion crushed by the new sultan in 1242.
- ◆ A more serious threat was the Mongols, who invaded eastern Asia Minor in 1243. This was the first time that Seljuk Turks had seen the power of the Mongol army. It was devastating. Kaykhusraw II's army was smashed by the Mongols in June 1243. The sultan survived, but he was forced to become a Mongol vassal and pay tribute to the great khan. By 1309, the sultan's family in Konya had died out, and the city itself was eventually conquered by the emirs of Karaman.

THE WHIRLING DERVISH

- ◆ The political demise of the sultans of Konya does not detract from the very significant political, institutional, social, and religious changes they initiated. One notable example is the career of Mevlana, a Sufi mystic who took the lead in converting Byzantine Christians to Islam and the Turkish way of life.
- ◆ Mevlana's real name was Jalal ad-Din Rumi. Originally an Iranian speaker, Rumi was born in the city of Balk somewhere around 1207.



The ceremonial dance popularly known as the whirling dervish

He came from a prominent family in Balk; his father, Baha ud-Din Walad, was an important theologian and jurist.

- ◆ Rumi's family were forced to leave Balk when the Mongols invaded. Mongol invasions forced many theologians, mystics, artists to Asia Minor during this time, and Rumi's family was one of them. The family initially relocated to Nishapur, but later moved to Baghdad and then Karaman before settling down in Konya at the invitation of the sultan.

- ◆ When Baha ud-Din Walad died, Rumi took it upon himself to reorganize his father's madrassa into a rigorous ascetic order. Initiates were trained to carry out a ceremonial dance popularly known as the whirling dervish. This was a significant innovation because it brought an entirely new dimension of religious experience to those who had previously practiced Orthodox Christianity.
- ◆ The whirling dervish was linked to the folk traditions of the Turkish world, as well as a kind of folk Islam the Turks had evolved since the 10th century. It was easily combined with village festivals and mores, traditions of hospitality that predated the arrival of the Turks and can still be seen in Anatolian life today.
- ◆ Whirling dervish performances combined elements of Islam, a faith new to the region, with more traditional elements that appealed to Christian villagers. Followers of Rumi writing in the 14th century spoke of miracles that took place as the whirling dervishes traveled across the region, occasionally resulting in mass conversions.
- ◆ Byzantine scholars attribute much of Rumi's religious influence to the severe disorientation of local Christians during this period. These Christians knew very little about their faith, their priests were illiterate, and bishops had not been sent from Constantinople for at least two generations. Monasteries had been neglected or abandoned. This religious vacuum was eagerly filled by Sufi mystics like Rumi.

The whirling dervish was linked to the folk traditions of the Turkish world.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why did the sultans of Konya fail to unify Muslim Asia Minor? What enduring Muslim political, administrative, and cultural institutions were forged by the sultans of Konya? How did their promotion of trade influence the process?
2. Why did the 13th century also prove so decisive for the genesis of an Islamic Asia Minor? How did the migration of Turkish tribes fleeing the Mongols in the 13th century contribute to the spread of the Turkish language and nomadic material life among the Christian sedentary populations? What factors led to the conversion of Christians to Islam? Why did Jalal ad-Din Rumi, or Mevlana, and his followers play such a crucial role?

SUGGESTED READING

Cahn, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*.

Vyrnos, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization*.

Ottoman Sultans of Bursa

This lecture examines the lives and legacies of Osman, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, and the early Ottoman sultans who succeeded him. Osman and his successors created a new Islamic state that aspired to the territorial limits of the middle Byzantine Empire but drew on the political and cultural institutions of the Abbasid caliphate. The early sultans expanded into new territories, forged classic Ottoman institutions, and promoted Islam and the high culture of Iran for more than a century.

BUILDING AN EMPIRE

- ◆ When Osman first came to power in 1299, he and his ragtag group of marauders—soon to be known as Ottomans—faced a number of powerful foes. Competing Muslims fought for control of Konya and the lands east of the Euphrates. The Byzantines still held the northwestern portion of Asia Minor, as they had since 1204. In the Balkans, Serbia was emerging as the leading Orthodox Christian state. Venice and Genoa, major centers of banking and international trade, were well positioned to threaten Ottoman naval power in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.
- ◆ Osman was a nominal vassal of the Seljuk sultans of Konya until 1299, when he asserted his independence and began raiding Byzantine territory. His forces were bolstered by a number of important recruits, including Turkmen warriors driven into Anatolia by the Mongols, and ex-Byzantine soldiers familiar with Byzantine tactics, engineering, and logistics.

- ◆ In the early 14th century, Osman laid siege to Nicaea, a former Byzantine capital. This bold action provoked a Byzantine counteroffensive, culminating in the Battle of Bapheus in 1302. The Byzantine army was annihilated. The Byzantine emperor, Andronikos II, refused to accept the loss of his territory to the Ottomans. He mortgaged the imperial treasury to hire an army of Catalan mercenaries led by Roger de Flor (aka Roger Blum), a falconer of Frederick II and a former Knight Templar.
- ◆ In the autumn of 1303, Roger de Flor and more than 8,000 veteran mercenaries assembled at Constantinople to spearhead the Byzantine offensive against the Ottomans. Osman withdrew his forces, avoiding contact with the heavy infantry and the heavily armored cavalry of the Catalans. Impatient, the Catalans began sacking Greek villages and treating the Orthodox population as if they were a conquered people, rather than one the Catalans were supposed to be liberating.
- ◆ In 1304, conflict with Andronikos II over the emperor's unpaid debts caused the Catalans to rebel against their employer. They seized the Dardanelles, crossed the strait, and fortified Gallipoli. Roger de Flor died under mysterious circumstances, presumably murdered by the emperor. The Catalans then laid siege to Constantinople, ravaged the empire's European provinces, and took over Athens in 1311.
- ◆ This turn of events led to a scramble for Byzantine territory. The Knights of Saint John seized Rhodes, the Serbians made great strides in the Balkans, and the Ottomans returned. Osman's forces blockaded Byzantine cities and destroyed the countryside until the cities were forced to surrender. The last city of significance to surrender to Osman was Bursa, formerly known as Prusa. Before he died, Osman declared Bursa his capital.
- ◆ Osman was succeeded by his son Orhan, who captured additional significant cities in what is now northwest Turkey. During Orhan's

reign, the northwest portion of Asia Minor was consolidated into the basis of an Ottoman state. Success bred recruits; more and more Turkoman tribes moved west to join the Ottomans as they expanded.

A NEW APPROACH

- ◆ Like their predecessors the Seljuks, the early Ottomans employed Byzantine officials when they could while generally following the administrative traditions of eastern Islam. Persians came in to staff the administration. Records and archives were often kept in Farsi rather than in Turkish, which remained primarily a spoken language. The Ottomans continued to promote the madrassas, inviting theologians and scholars to relocate so that Bursa would become a credible capital.
- ◆ The early Ottomans' approach to governance differed from the Seljuks' in certain notable respects, however, including the treatment of Christian subjects. The Seljuks had had difficulty controlling their tribal regiments, who often sacked local monasteries. Under the early Ottoman sultans, Christian institutions were not destroyed. Christians were still treated as second-class citizens, but they were protected under the Quran.
- ◆ This restrained approach to Christianity was very important for Ottoman expansion in the 14th and 15th centuries. Eventually, almost all of the Orthodox populations of southeastern Europe and Asia minor would come under Ottoman rule. Many Orthodox Christians concluded that they were better off under the tolerant and ordered rule of the Ottoman sultans than they would have been under the chaotic rule of the late Byzantine emperors or, worse yet, the Catholic kings of western Europe.

Many Orthodox Christians concluded that they were better off under the tolerant and ordered rule of the Ottoman sultans.

THE BATTLE OF KOSOVO

- ◆ Ottoman soldiers gained a reputation as the most feared warriors in Asia Minor. In 1341, the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III died, which sparked a civil war. During the war, both sides hired Turkish mercenaries, many of whom were Orhan's subjects.
- ◆ When the Turkish mercenaries were eventually discharged, they seized the strategic peninsula of Gallipoli. They fortified the peninsula in 1354—giving them control over the Dardanelles—and invited their sultan, Orhan, to take over. This was the bridgehead the Ottomans needed to expand into Europe for the first time. The Ottomans soon swept across the Balkans, which had fallen into disarray after the death of Serbian ruler Stefan Dušan and an outbreak of the Black Death. When Orhan died, his expansion efforts were continued by his son and successor Murat I.
- ◆ The fight for control over the Balkans climaxed in 1389 at the Battle of Kosovo, in which the Serbian armies of Lazar, Stefan Dušan's successor, faced off against Murat I's Ottomans. Murat was killed during the battle under circumstances that remain unknown. His son, Bayezid I Yildirim ("the Thunderbolt"), kept Murat's death a secret until the Ottomans were victorious. After the battle, Bayezid announced that his father's death was the result of Serbian treachery. He then had his half-brothers strangled, preempting any arguments about succession.
- ◆ After the Battle of Kosovo, Serbia became a tributary of the Ottoman state, eliminating the last serious Orthodox threat to Ottoman control. Bayezid I knew, however, that the Serbian attack had been encouraged by the Byzantine emperor. He also knew that his empire would be in a precarious position strategically unless he was able to take Constantinople.
- ◆ In 1396, Bayezid blockaded Constantinople and ordered the Byzantine emperor to surrender. The Byzantines sent word of their



Bursa Grand Mosque, ordered by the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I

situation to western Europe, and the pope began calling for a crusade. Sigismund, a king of Hungary who later became the Holy Roman emperor, eagerly answered the call. Sigismund was joined by knights from all over western Europe—including France, Germany, Venice, and Genoa—who were concerned about the threat posed by the increasingly powerful Ottomans.

- ◆ Bayezid mobilized his forces and repelled the crusaders in a resounding victory at the Battle of Nicopolis. He then returned to the siege of Constantinople, but lacked the artillery necessary to destroy the city's ancient walls. While the siege was underway, however, a new threat emerged that nearly destroyed the nascent Ottoman Empire: the armies of Tamerlane, the Prince of Destruction.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What advantages did the sultans from Osman to Bayezid I possess in forging the Ottoman Empire? Why was the heartland of Rumelia so important? How much did Ottoman success depend on the abilities of the sultan and the fortunes of war?
2. What political, religious, and social institutions did the sultans create to secure their empire? How much was the Ottoman state the successor to Christian Byzantium? How has it drawn on the Islamic traditions since the Abbasid caliphate?

SUGGESTED READING

Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople*.

Defeat and Recovery, 1402–1451

After his victory at the Battle of Kosovo, Bayezid I turned the Ottoman sultanate into a great tributary empire astride southeastern Europe and Asia Minor. In 1402, however, Bayezid was unexpectedly defeated by Tamerlane, who is sometimes referred to as the Prince of Destruction. Tamerlane ruthlessly sacked the cities of Asia Minor and partitioned the Ottoman state among the sons of Bayezid. After a brief period of separation, the Ottoman sultanate was ultimately reunited by Mehmet I and restored as a great regional power by Mehmet's successor, Murat II.

THE PRINCE OF DESTRUCTION

- ◆ After his victory at Nicopolis in 1396, Bayezid I built a vassal empire embracing Rumelia and Anatolia that was a match to the Mamluk sultanate of Cairo. Ultimately, however, Bayezid failed to capitalize on his success. Knowing that the Byzantine emperor had been the architect of the crusade, Bayezid blockaded Constantinople, but his siege guns were ineffective.
- ◆ In spring of 1402, Bayezid was forced to lift the siege of Constantinople to face Tamerlane, who had invaded Anatolia in pursuit of his dream to recreate the Mongol Empire. Bayezid and Tamerlane had long disputed eastern lands of Anatolia and the al-Jazirah, and Bayezid had received the exiled sultan Ahmet Jalayir of Baghdad in 1400.



Tamerlane
(1336–1405)

- ◆ Tamerlane's attention had previously been directed toward Baghdad. In 1402, however, he unexpectedly swept into Asia Minor. In response to Tamerlane's incursion, Bayezid—despite having limited information on Tamerlane's army—deployed an army of 85,000 men to Anatolia.
- ◆ Tamerlane marched swiftly across Asia Minor, ruthlessly sacking cities and driving refugees westward. As he continued his campaign, reports of Mongol atrocities spread.
- ◆ Bayezid and Tamerlane met in battle near Angora on July 20, 1402. Bayezid was an able commander with an excellent army. But Tamerlane's army—comprised of 135,000 veterans from campaigns in India, Iran, and Syria—was far superior, and Tamerlane himself was a military genius.
- ◆ Tamerlane occupied field first. His engineers diverted the course of a nearby tributary of the Ankara River such that the Ottoman army was denied water at the height of summer. Bayezid was forced to risk battle. The Timurid elephant corps smashed through Bayezid's Janissaries, who were occupying a ridge in a tactical deployment that had worked well at Nicopolis. Meanwhile, Tamerlane's cavalry flanked the Ottoman army. The Ottomans collapsed, and Bayezid was captured.
- ◆ Bayezid died at Samarkand in gilded captivity; the story of Bayezid spending his later days in a gilded cage is a legend. Tamerlane ravaged Anatolia, withdrew to Samarkand, and died in early 1405 during a campaign against China.
- ◆ Tamerlane partitioned the Ottoman state among the sons of Bayezid. After the partition, the region of Anatolia was ruled from Bursa, and the region of Rumelia was ruled from Edirne. This partition was comparable to the settlement imposed by the Mongol Baiju Noyon on the sultanate of Konya in 1243.

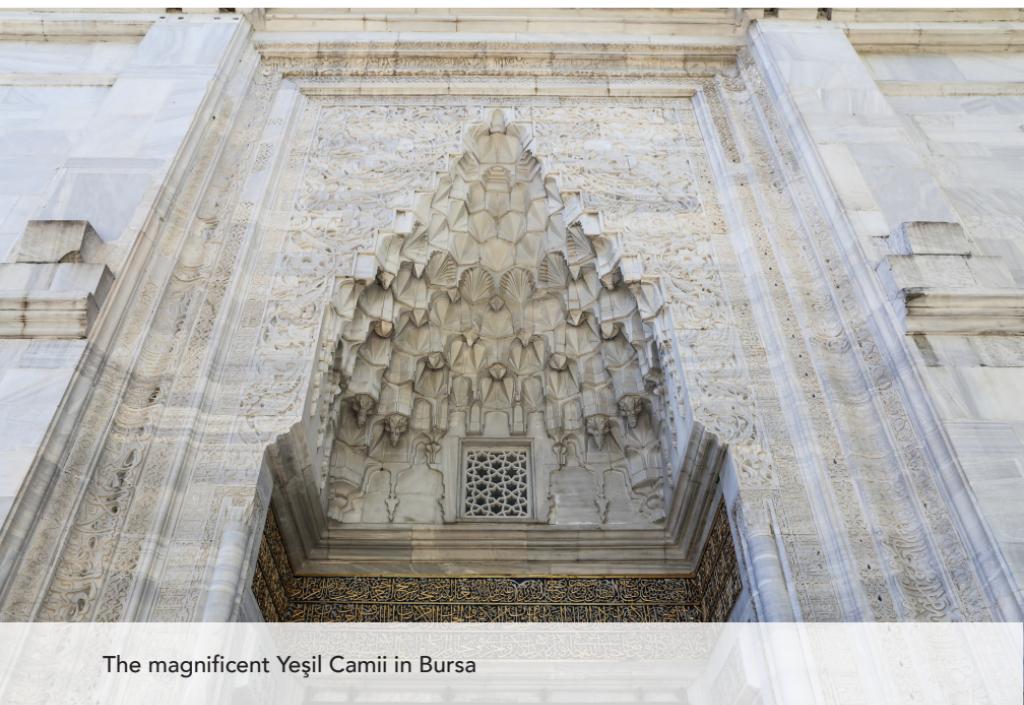
- ◆ The sons of Bayezid schemed against each other, and they protested their loyalty to Tamerlane and his successors. Meanwhile, many tributary princes renounced their Ottoman allegiance. The Ottoman state looked as if it were doomed to fragment, just like the Seljuk sultanate of Konya had disintegrated.

A DYNASTY RESTORED

- ◆ The sultans Mehmet I Çelebi and Murat II mounted a remarkable recovery from the defeat at Angora. They soon reorganized what had been an empire of vassal states into a bureaucratic monarchy.
- ◆ In 1413, Mehmet I, the last surviving son of Bayezid, ended a decade of civil war and reunited the Ottoman Empire. Mehmet professed his loyalty to the Timurid sultans of Iran, but Timurid power had passed with the death of Tamerlane in 1405.
- ◆ Mehmet controlled Rumelia, the vital heartland of manpower and money that enabled him to restore Ottoman power. He successfully overcame his half-brothers in civil war, put down the popular insurrection inspired by the Sufi mystic Sheikh Bedreddin, and defeated pretenders financed by Byzantine emperor Manuel II. Mehmet marked political recovery by the construction of the magnificent Yeşil Camii in Bursa, one of the most stunning of the mortuary memorial mosques in the city.
- ◆ At his accession in 1421, Murat II faced the daunting task of restoring Ottoman rule in the Balkans. He also had to deal with recalcitrant *beyler* and Turkmen tribes in Anatolia who resented any central control.

Tamerlane's cavalry flanked the Ottoman army. The Ottomans collapsed, and Bayezid was captured.

- ◆ Murat targeted Constantinople after emperor Manuel II released Mustafa, Murat's uncle and rival to the throne, who seized Gallipoli and raised a rebellion in Bursa in favor of his son Mehmet. In 1422, Murat defeated his uncle and cousin. He then laid siege to Constantinople. The city's ancient walls defied Murat's siege guns, and Murat had to withdraw to deal with another rebellion among the beyler of Asia Minor, but he obtained the homage of Manuel II.
- ◆ In 1423, Manuel II ceded Thessalonica (which had been under Ottoman blockade since 1422) to the Venetians. He then labored to launch yet another crusade against the Ottoman Empire. Murat feared Venice might occupy Constantinople, or invite King Sigismund of Hungary to invade the Ottoman Empire again.



The magnificent Yeşil Camii in Bursa

- ◆ In 1423, Murat returned to the Balkans, annexing Christian vassal kingdoms all too prone to rebel at the first sign of Ottoman weakness. He waged a costly war against Venice, launching the first Ottoman fleet and capturing Thessalonica in 1430. By 1440, Murat had secured the Via Egnatia, pacified Macedonia and Albania, and reached the Adriatic Sea. He also campaigned in Bulgaria to regain the lower Danube, but he faced a hostile George Branković, despot of Serbia, who had claims to the Byzantine legacy.
- ◆ During the Ottoman interregnum, Sigismund had restored Hungarian influence in Serbia, Bosnia, and the Danubian lands of Bulgaria, reversing the outcome at Nicopolis. In 1437, Sigismund died. During the ensuing crisis of succession, Murat campaigned to regain control of the lower Danube and Serbia.
- ◆ In 1439, Murat invaded and annexed Serbia. In 1440, however, he was compelled to raise the siege of Belgrade with the approach of a Hungarian-Serbian relief army under John Hunyadi. In 1440, the Hungarian nobility selected Jagiellon king of Poland Wladyslaw III as their ruler. The king entrusted command to John Hunyadi, who drove Murat out of Serbia.
- ◆ Weary of two decades of campaigning, Murat signed treaties with the king of Hungary and the emir of Karaman. In 1444, Murat retired to contemplative life as a Sufi acolyte. He entrusted the Ottoman throne to his 12-year-old son, Mehmet II.

BACK IN ACTION

- ◆ When Murat retired, the court at Edirne was divided into factions fighting for control of Mehmet II. Meanwhile, the young sultan had to face a new crusade preached by Pope Eugenius IV.
- ◆ Byzantine emperor Manuel II and his successor, John VIII, had each visited Italy in search of western military assistance. The negotiations

culminated with the union of the two churches in 1439 at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. John VIII and the imperial family converted to Roman Catholicism, and Pope Eugenius IV delivered the promised crusade.

- ◆ Wladyslaw III entrusted command of his forces to the talented John Hunyadi, voivode of Transylvania, while Cardinal Julian Cesarini served as the Pope's legate. The crusade, which featured an army of 30,000 men, also included Vlad II Dracul, voivode of Wallachia, and George Castriota, the redoubtable Albanian bey turned Christian prince and implacable foe to the Ottomans.
- ◆ A combined Venetian-Genoese-Papal fleet, with Byzantine support, was to close the Dardanelles, preventing the Ottomans from transferring major forces from Anatolia to Europe. Strategically, John Hunyadi advanced down the Danube, reaching Nicopolis on October 10, 1444. Hunyadi threatened to advance on Edirne, but his main objective was to link up with the fleet near Varna and then press south into Thrace.
- ◆ The Christian advance threw the Ottoman court into consternation as many residents fled the capital. Mehmet begged his father to come out of retirement; Murat slipped across the Dardanelles and joined the Ottoman army, perhaps 50,000 strong. From Edirne, Murat swiftly advanced to meet the crusaders on the Franga plateau northwest of Varna on November 10, 1444.
- ◆ The rash, young Wladyslaw III insisted on attacking the Ottoman army drawn up on the high ground, but Christian assaults were driven back. Leading 500 Polish knights, Wladyslaw attempted to break through the Janissaries and slay Murat, but the king and his knights were surrounded and cut down. John Hunyadi ordered a withdrawal, but many Christians fled in panic and were slain in the marshes between the lake and the city.
- ◆ Murat's spectacular victory broke the power of the Hungarian kingdom for the next generation. Murat had saved the throne for his son, but

he took command again in 1446 to wage desultory frontier wars in Serbia and Albania against John Hunyadi and George Castriota.

- ◆ By the time of his death, Murat had restored Ottoman power in the Balkans and Anatolia, defeated the most formidable western European army to date, fixed his empire's frontiers on the lower Danube, launched Ottoman warships against Venice, reorganized and expanded the Janissaries, and improved his army's engineering corps and artillery park.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why did the Ottoman sultanate recover within a generation of the defeat at the hands of Tamerlane at Angora in 1402?
2. Why did the reigns of Mehmet I and Murat IV represent a turning point in the evolution of the Ottoman state? Why was the capture of Constantinople a priority for this new Ottoman empire in 1451?

SUGGESTED READING

Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople*.

Mehmet the Conqueror, 1451–1481

Mehmet II was arguably the greatest Ottoman sultan in the empire's long history. After capturing Constantinople in 1453, Mehmet established the central bureaucracy that would govern the Ottoman Empire for the next four centuries. Mehmet had an extraordinary record of conquest. He also rebuilt Constantinople as a cosmopolitan and Muslim city, and he provided ordered, tolerant rule to the Orthodox populations that formed the majority of his subjects. At his death on May 3, 1481, the Ottoman Empire stood as one of leading Muslim empires.

EARLY LIFE

- ◆ Mehmet II Fatih ("the Conqueror"), the precocious and arrogant son of Murat II, was born at Edirne in 1432. In his formative years, the young prince received an excellent education. Mehmet was compelled to learn statecraft at a young age in the turbulent final years of his father's reign. In his early teens, he was sent to govern Amasya.
- ◆ Despite later rumors circulated that Mehmet planned to convert to Christianity, Mehmet was a devout Muslim, and he believed in his destiny to conquer infidel lands at the opportune time. He was imbued with a strong sense of religious mission, including the conquest of Constantinople, as mandated in the Koran and the Hadith.

- ◆ In August 1444, Murat abdicated and retired. The 12-year-old Mehmet was hailed sultan, and he returned to Edirne under the supervision of the powerful grand vizier Çandarlı Halil.
- ◆ Mehmet pleaded with his father to emerge from retirement and lead the Ottoman army at Varna on November 10, 1444. Afterward, Grand Vizier Halil convinced Murat to return to the throne and set Mehmet aside. In 1451, Murat died at Edirne, and Mehmet again became sultan.

SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

- ◆ Mehmet came to the throne at age 19. He was ambitious and relentless, and he set out to forge a court of loyal ministers and generals.
- ◆ The attack by crusaders in 1444 had taught Mehmet the importance of taking Constantinople. The city's strategic location would allow the movement of forces between Rumelia and Anatolia, as well as the control of shipping between the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea.
- ◆ Initially, Mehmet confirmed the privileges of Genoa and Venice, and exchanged cordial embassies with John Hunyadi of Hungary and Despot George Branković of Serbia. But Byzantine emperor Constantine XI suspected the ambitions of the young sultan from the start.
- ◆ On the European side of the Bosphorus, Mehmet constructed the fortress Rumeli Hisarı, and his artillery interdicted shipping. Byzantine envoys protesting the action were beheaded.
- ◆ Constantine XI pleaded for military assistance from Pope Nicholas V. On December 12, 1452, in the Hagia Sophia, Constantine XI and the imperial family embraced Catholicism and accepted the Union of 1439 in return for military assistance which never came.



The fortress Rumeli Hisarı

- ◆ Mehmet saw the siege of Constantinople as a means to assert his authority over his father's ministers, led by Grand Vizier Halil, and the traditional Turkish nobility. In 1452, Mehmet mobilized vast forces of more than 100,000 men, including 6,000 Janissaries, and a fleet of 220 foists to assure quick victory before a Western crusade or the Venetian fleet could intervene.
- ◆ Constantine XI calculated that a prolonged siege would undermine Mehmet and allow for the arrival of Western reinforcements. But the pope could not mobilize European monarchs to send aid, and the Venetians responded too late.
- ◆ The great siege of Constantinople saw innovations in artillery and naval warfare, but the small imperial army of 7,000 almost drove off the Ottoman army. Despite repeated Ottoman assaults, the defenders fought the Ottomans to stalemate. On May 29, 1453, Mehmet gambled on a final assault in three waves, and luck delivered an open gate and the city to Ottoman forces.
- ◆ The capture of Constantinople assured Mehmet's sovereignty. It also gave him the strategic position to direct major conquests in the Balkans and Asia Minor, and to break the naval and commercial power of Genoa and Venice.
- ◆ Generous terms and the well-ordered government of Mehmet won the passive acceptance of Orthodox populations as Ottoman armies conquered the Balkans. Eventually, Mehmet made the bold decision to relocate the Ottoman capital from Edirne to Constantinople, then a ruined city of 50,000 residents.

REBUILDING THE CITY

- ◆ Mehmet expended considerable efforts to repopulate his new capital, a decision that rescued Constantinople from oblivion. Many of the

city's residents were enslaved in the sack, so Mehmet proclaimed an amnesty and encouraged former residents to return to the city.

- ◆ Throughout his reign, Mehmet deported craftsmen and merchants from conquered cities to the capital. Greeks fleeing the chaotic Morea were received in the Phanar district, which emerged as a wealthy commercial center.
- ◆ Jews from Thessalonica immigrated on generous terms. Mehmet favored his Jewish subjects, thus attracting Jewish merchants and bankers to emigrate from the cities of the Rhineland and Italy. In Constantinople, the Jewish Balat district quickly emerged as a thriving business center.
- ◆ The podesta of Galata, a Genoese enclave within the city, surrendered control to Mehmet. Shortly thereafter, Mehmet confirmed the commercial and legal rights of the Genoese community. While the Genoese were allowed to continue their commercial activities, they no longer formed an independent community.
- ◆ Mehmet rebuilt Constantinople as a Muslim city worthy of the new imperial court of the House of Osman. Murat II and his predecessors had ruled in an austere manner befitting Ottoman sultans who styled themselves as heroic ghazi of the Steppes. Mehmet ruled as a Muslim Caesar, adopting the ceremony of the Sassanid, Abbasid, and Byzantine courts. Mehmet's vast building program not only restored the city, but marked new Muslim sacred and religious space that transformed Byzantine Constantinople into Ottoman Kostantiniyye.
- ◆ Mehmet soon established the central administration that would govern the Ottoman Empire for the next 400 years. Besides meticulous administrative records, Mehmet ordered the collection

The Orthodox populations bowed to Ottoman rule, preferring the sultans to the Catholic kings of Hungary.

of geographic works, maps, and information on rival Christian powers to ensure that his ruling council would be well informed.

- ◆ Mehmet imposed a strict hierarchy on his viziers. Beginning in 1453, he selected his grand vizier from among his ablest, most loyal slaves. He also doubled the number of Janissaries from 6,000 to 12,000 to staff the growing central administration.

GROWTH AND SECURITY

- ◆ Mehmet waged almost continuous wars along the Ottoman frontier to expand and protect his empire. His first priority was the defense of Rumelia, centered on the Muslim timars in the Maritsa valley and Edirne, and vital for manpower, timber, and mines.
- ◆ Mehmet then secured the frontier along the lower Danube and gained control of the Via Egnatia, the highway across the Balkans from Constantinople to Durazzo. He also brought the Albanians and Byzantine despots of the Morea under control. By 1463, Mehmet had secured an effective frontier that endured until the 19th century.
- ◆ Mehmet soon imposed direct Ottoman rule over the religiously diverse communities of Bosnia. The Orthodox populations bowed to Ottoman rule, preferring the sultans to the Catholic kings of Hungary.
- ◆ A more serious threat to Ottoman control was Venice, whose colonial empire in 1453 included most of the Greek islands in the Aegean. After a series of battles—which included the launch the first Ottoman naval fleet—Venice signed a peace treaty and agreed to pay the Ottomans an annual tribute of 10,000 ducats.
- ◆ Through an extraordinary succession of campaigns, Mehmet turned the Ottoman sultanate into an empire, embracing the Balkans and Anatolia, and controlling the Black Sea and outer ring of allies and

vassals. In 1480, he ordered a daring naval expedition to open his greatest campaign: the conquest of Italy and Rome.

- ◆ Mehmet had long postured as the future conqueror of Rome, and he allowed rumors to circulate about his interest in Christianity. Mehmet was driven by a relentless urge to conquer, and he often compared himself to Alexander the Great.
- ◆ One could argue that Mehmet's future reputation was assured by his fortuitous death in 1481. A conquest of Italy could well have been beyond the means of the Ottoman army and state. Nevertheless, Mehmet II had made the Ottoman Empire a reality. He had taken Constantinople, conquered Rumelia and Anatolia, and established a central administration that would govern the empire for centuries to come.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why did the capture of Constantinople in 1453 enable Mehmet II to conquer a vast empire and establish an imperial administration? What did Mehmet owe to the Byzantine and earlier Islamic empires?
2. What were the costs and long-term consequences of Mehmet's brilliant record of conquests? Was Mehmet II the greatest of the Ottoman sultans?

SUGGESTED READING

Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*.

Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople*.

Selim the Grim and the Conquest of Cairo

The sudden death of Mehmet II plunged the Ottoman Empire into a succession crisis comparable to that of 1403 to 1413. Mehmet's eldest son, Bayezid II Adlî ("the Just"), quickly took control of the capital and consolidated the empire. A capable sultan, Bayezid reformed the Ottoman administration, secured the revenues to pay off his father's expensive wars, and conquered the remaining Venetian fortresses in the Morea. Soon thereafter, Bayezid was overthrown by his ruthless son Selim Yavuz ("the Grim"), who doubled the size of the sultanate and turned the Ottoman Empire into the world's premier Muslim state.

BAYEZID THE JUST

- ◆ Bayezid II, the son of Mehmet II, was 33 years old when Mehmet died on May 3, 1481. At the time, Bayezid was governing from Amasya. Bayezid was Mehmet's favored son, but he faced a dashing younger half-brother, Cem, who ruled Konya and Karaman.
- ◆ In Constantinople, the grand vizier laid out Mehmet's body—in violation of Muslim custom—and contacted the two brothers. The grand vizier, who likely favored Cem, was then assassinated by the Janissaries. The Janissaries rioted on behalf of Bayezid II, who was perceived as a cautious, moderate ruler. In the race to the capital, Bayezid arrived first, and he won over the Janissaries and the administration.

- ◆ Cem, at the head of 4,000 Anatolian levies, captured Inegöl, defeated loyalist forces, and occupied Bursa, where he was hailed sultan of Anatolia. Bayezid rejected Cem's proposal of a partition of the empire, and the two brothers took the field. On June 20, 1481, at Yenişehir, Bayezid defeated Cem, who fled to the court of the Mamluks.
- ◆ In 1482, Cem, with Mamluk support, invaded Anatolia. While Cem was stalled at Ankara, Bayezid mobilized the Janissaries and timariots. Cem sought refuge with the Knights of Saint John, who kept him in gilded captivity in return for a payment by Bayezid.
- ◆ In 1489, custody of Cem was given to Pope Innocent VIII, who extorted 120,000 gold crowns, a relic of the holy lance, and an annual maintenance fee of 45,000 ducats. Cem died in 1495—much to the relief of Bayezid—and his body was interred at the Muratiye Mosque in Bursa.
- ◆ Conscious of the possibility of another crusade, Bayezid waged wars against Venice to secure control of the Aegean Sea and thereby deny bases to Christian naval attacks. In 1499, Kemal Reis, a talented Ottoman admiral, won a stunning victory over a smaller Venetian fleet off the northwest shore of Pylos. In 1500, he defeated at second Venetian fleet near the fortress of Modon.
- ◆ The Ottomans secured further victories in the Balkans over the next two years. Venice, acknowledging its losses, signed a peace treaty on January 31, 1503. By concentrating on Greece, however, Bayezid had put his eastern frontier in jeopardy: Eastern Turkmen tribes, backed by Shi'ite shah Ismail I of Persia, repeatedly rebelled against the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Bayezid reorganized the empire's administration, reformed its fiscal institutions, and paid off the debts acquired by his father, Mehmet II. Notably, Bayezid welcomed Muslims and Jews expelled from Granada by Spanish monarchs Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon.

- ◆ In 1512, an aging Bayezid was overthrown by his son Selim after a brief civil war. Bayezid retired to Büyüçekmece, and Selim was crowned sultan.

SELM THE GRIM

- ◆ Selim inherited from Bayezid a sound administration and secure frontiers against the Christian powers. To the east, however, the new sultan faced two Muslim rivals: the Mamluk sultans of Egypt and Safavid shah Ismail I of Persia.
- ◆ Ottoman rule was never popular in eastern Anatolia, al-Jazirah, or the high plateau of Armenia, where pastoral Turkmen tribes tended their herds and flocks. These heterodox Turkmen resented onerous rule from Constantinople, preferring the distant overlord, Shah Ismail I.
- ◆ Selim waged war against Iran, Syria, and Egypt on a scale far beyond any previous Ottoman campaigns. He was well served by the experienced officers, superb logistics, and disciplined infantry, artillerists, and engineers of one of the finest armies in 16th-century Eurasia.



Bayezid II
(1447/48–1512)

- ◆ Ismail, a Shi'ite, posed the greater military and ideological threat to Selim; the Sunni Mamluks had, at times, cooperated with Ottoman sultans against common foes. The shah, who commanded the loyalty of many Turkmen tribes, viewed Selim as an upstart rival.
- ◆ In 1514, Selim set out on a campaign to destroy the heretic Safavid state in the name of Sunni Islam. He departed from Bursa and made his way across northern Asia Minor, summoning timariots and provincial forces along the way. Leading an army of 120,000, Selim marched toward Tabriz, the Safavid capital.
- ◆ On August 23, 1514, Selim defeated Ismail and the smaller Safavid army at Çaldırán. The Ottoman victory marked a paradigm shift in warfare; Selim's disciplined infantry, supported by field artillery, had smashed the classic nomadic cavalry of Ismail. On September 5, 1514, Selim entered and sacked an abandoned Tabriz.
- ◆ The sack of Tabriz was hailed by Ottoman chroniclers as the triumph of Sunni Islam over a heresy—a new feature in Ottoman ideology. Selim soon returned to Constantinople. His spectacular victories against the Safavids had made war with the Mamluks inevitable.

AN OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

- ◆ In 1516, Mamluk sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri was the senior ruler of Sunni Islam. The Mamluk sultans had turned Cairo into the center of Sunni power and cultural life. They had defeated crusaders and Mongols in the 13th century and resurrected the empire of Saladin, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.
- ◆ From 1516 to 1517, Selim pulled off his greatest strategic and logistical success. He overthrew the Mamluk sultanate in a single year of campaigning, winning two decisive battles that again proved the superiority of the Ottoman army over traditional nomadic cavalry.



Shah Ismail in a battle

- ◆ Selim—bold, ruthless, and brilliant—appeared reckless to many of his contemporaries when he left Constantinople to campaign against the Mamluks. In March of 1516, Selim’s grand vizier mobilized the timariots of Kayseri and quickly secured Marash, the strategic entrance into

Syria. In June and July, Selim marched the Janissaries, spahis, the timariots of Rumelia, and at least 50 field pieces across Asia Minor.

- ◆ Qansuh al-Ghawri, 80 years old and ailing, responded to the Ottoman advances by mobilizing Mamluk cavalry and local Arab allies numbering 80,000. On August 24, Selim and 65,000 of his men, clashed with the forces of Qansuh al-Ghawri at Marj Dābiq, 27 miles north of Aleppo. Mamluk cavalry were felled by volleys of Janissaries and Ottoman artillery, and Qansuh al-Ghawri was killed in the rout.
- ◆ After defeating Qansuh al-Ghawri, Selim entered Aleppo. Then, in early September, Damascus surrendered. With Levantine ports under his control, Selim mobilized a fleet to support the Ottoman crossing of the Sinai in the winter of 1516 to 1517.
- ◆ A council of Mamluk emirs selected Grand Vizier Al-Ashraf Tuman bay, better known as Tuman bay II, to be the next sultan. Tuman bay hastily raised forces, including artillery furnished by Venice, to oppose Selim.
- ◆ Selim, accompanied by 35,000 men, crossed the Sinai in eight days. On January 12, 1517, Selim and his men entered the Nile valley. Meanwhile, Tuman bay built entrenchments at Ridaniya, just outside Cairo.
- ◆ On January 22, Mamluk cavalry attacked Selim's forces and were repelled by Ottoman Janissaries and artillery. The Ottomans counterattacked, sweeping over the Mamluk entrenchments; the Mamluks had little experience using cannons. Selim's grand vizier was killed, and Tuman bay fled south. Selim entered Cairo and waited for the rest of his army to arrive.
- ◆ On January 29, Tuman bay returned and reoccupied Cairo, but the Ottoman army fought its way back into the city. Fifty thousand fell in the fighting, and the city was sacked. Tuman bay escaped to organize resistance, but was ultimately betrayed. On April 13, 1517, he was executed in Cairo.

- ◆ Selim's conquest of the Mamluk sultanate dramatically shifted the axis of Islamic power and civilization from Cairo to Constantinople, where it would remain for the next three centuries. Once he had secured Cairo, Selim compelled the last Abbasid caliph, al-Mutawakkil III, to abdicate in his favor. Selim took possession of the sword and mantle of Muhammad and conveyed them to his palace in Constantinople.
- ◆ Barakat Efendi, sharif of Hejaz and steward of the holy cities, Mecca and Medina, soon acknowledged Selim as his overlord. Oruç Reis, a restless corsair who had seized Algiers, offered up his realm as an Ottoman sanjak. Even the Mughal emperors of Delhi acknowledged the spiritual authority of the Ottoman caliph in Constantinople.
- ◆ In 1520, Selim died unexpectedly, possibly of plague. He left to his son Suleiman an Ottoman Empire that was thenceforth a world power.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How successful was Bayezid II? Was he correctly remembered as a just and peaceful sultan? Why did he fail to provide for an orderly succession?
2. How did the reign of Selim Yavuz represent a turning point for the Ottoman Empire? What were the consequences of his assumption of the title caliph? What legacy did he transmit to his brilliant son Suleiman the Magnificent?

SUGGESTED READING

Fleet, "The Ottomans."

Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Suleiman the Magnificent, 1520–1566

Suleiman the Magnificent, the 10th and longest reigning sultan, brought the Ottoman Empire to its political and cultural zenith. He codified imperial law, reorganized the Islamic hierarchy, patronized arts, and established an imperial administration of professional Muslim bureaucrats. Above all, Suleiman was a conqueror, waging impressive campaigns in the Balkans and Iran.

CIVIL ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ Suleiman, as the only son of Selim I, succeeded to the Ottoman throne without incident. It is a testimony to the ability of Suleiman and the professionalism of his administration that peace and prosperity prevailed during his reign despite numerous military campaigns and a naval war in the Mediterranean.
- ◆ Suleiman was accomplished, vigorous, and brilliant in law, administration, and war, and he presided over the height of the Ottoman Empire. Western Europeans dubbed him Suleiman the Magnificent. To the Muslim world, he was known as Suleiman Kanuni ("the Lawgiver"), the highest compliment paid to a monarch who ruled in accordance with *Şeriat*, sacred Islamic law.
- ◆ Suleiman turned Constantinople into a great Islamic capital that forever set standard of Islamic architecture. In his passion for

visual arts and learning, Suleiman was in every way the equal of his European contemporaries, including Holy Roman emperor Charles V, Francis I of France, and Henry VIII of England.

- ◆ Suleiman expanded both the imperial military and civil bureaucracy into the professional administration of the Porte, and he showed exceptional judgment in his appointments at all levels of government. Initially, Suleiman retained the services of his father's ministers. Only gradually did he replace the divan with talented new appointments.
- ◆ Suleiman expanded and reorganized the madrassas, and he recruited evermore graduates as secretaries and fiscal officials—foremost among these, historian and chief of scribes Celâlzâde Muştafa Čelebî. Suleiman thus created a professional Muslim bureaucratic class.
- ◆ Suleiman likewise organized and promoted the four Sunni religious schools and enhanced the spiritual and administrative powers of the Shaikh al-Islam, the honorary title of the grand mufti of Constantinople. Ebussuud Efendi, Hanafi jurist and Shaikh al-Islam, revised and edited imperial law and customary local laws in conformity with *Şeriat*.

MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

- ◆ In contrast to his predecessors, Suleiman had to wage wars against foes with competing ideologies on two frontiers, and he could not afford a two-front war. Suleiman inherited a superb professional army from Selim, and he increased the number of Ottoman spahis and Janissaries to wage lengthy expeditions in Hungary and Iran.
- ◆ Suleiman faced powerful rival rulers with competing ideologies of world domination: Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor and king of Spain, and Tahmasp I, the Safavid shah of Iran. Suleiman thus spent considerable time campaigning on distant frontiers in the Balkans,



Holy Roman emperor Charles V
(1500–1558)

Hungary, and the Middle East. He also launched a major naval war against Venice, Genoa, the Papacy, and Spain.

- ◆ Suleiman stretched Ottoman logistics and finances to their limits. On August 29, 1526, he won his greatest victory, defeating and slaying King Louis II of Hungary at the Battle of Mohács. But the victory at Mohács

failed to yield rich conquests or security, and from 1540 involved Suleiman in a costly war of sieges along the Hungarian frontier.

- ◆ Despite impressive victories early in his reign, Suleiman suffered several important setbacks, notably at Vienna in 1529 and Malta in 1565. Ultimately, decades of fighting over Hungarian fortresses ended in Suleiman's final campaign, against Szigetvár. In 1566, Suleiman died before the final assault, and the subsequent Ottoman victory proved inconclusive.
- ◆ During Suleiman's reign, Safavid Iran posed a greater threat than those faced by the Ottomans in Europe. Suleiman needed to defend not only the frontiers of eastern Anatolia, but also the historic capitals of Islam if he were to win over Arab subjects to the notion of a Turkish caliph.
- ◆ Selim I had humbled Shah Ismail I at the Battle of Çaldıran. But Safavid Iran had revived, and Shi'ite mystics spread heterodox and apocalyptic doctrines among the Turkmen tribes of eastern Anatolia. Suleiman waged three desultory wars in Iran, sharpening both the imperial rivalry and the religious division between Sunni and Shi'ite.
- ◆ From 1532 to 1536, Suleiman led a campaign against the Iranian forces and retook Bitlis, Tabriz, and Baghdad. Suleiman committed the Ottoman government thenceforth to the defense of Baghdad—vital for the legitimacy of a Turkish caliph in the eyes of his numerous Sunni subjects.
- ◆ In 1538, the Ottomans secured Basra, but the Portuguese held Hormuz and confined Ottoman naval power to the Persian Gulf. In the 1540s and 1550s, Suleiman had to break off operations in Hungary to retake border fortresses in Georgia and Armenia occupied by Shah Tahmasp I, Ismail I's successor.
- ◆ The Ottoman campaign against Iran ended with the Treaty of Amasya—a peace between the two exhausted powers—in May 1555.

Suleiman and Tahmasp agreed to partition the borderlands and suspend the ideological war, but the rivalry had not been settled. Suleiman left his heirs an unstable eastern frontier and an ideological rivalry that still affects relations between Turkey and Iran today.

- ◆ Farther west, Suleiman engaged in diplomacy and a naval war to break the power of Habsburg Spain under Charles V and then Philip II. By 1536, Suleiman and King Francis I of France had negotiated an alliance to cooperate against Charles V. The alliance resulted in the first permanent European embassy in Constantinople, and Suleiman granted trading concessions to French merchants and their native agents.
- ◆ In 1537, Suleiman ordered a third naval war against Venice. The following year, Charles V and Pope Paul III formed a Holy League to drive back the Ottoman navy and assist hard-pressed Venice. On September 28, 1538, Genoese admiral Andrea Doria, commanding the league's fleet, was outmaneuvered at the Battle of Preveza by Hayreddin Barbarossa, commander of the Ottoman imperial fleet and the greatest admiral of the 16th century.
- ◆ In 1565, Suleiman overreached the logistical capacity of the imperial fleet when he ordered his forces to capture the fortresses of the Hospitallers on the island of Malta. The Ottoman fleet arrived early with a force of nearly 50,000, and placed Malta under siege for nearly four months. The Ottomans should have taken the city, but Malta's tenacious defenders and the arrival of a relief army of Spanish soldiers turned the tide.

SULEIMAN AND ROXELANA

- ◆ Beginning with Murat I, Ottoman sultans had maintained a harem at Edirne. Sultans contracted marriages and took concubines as a means of cementing political ties with vassal princes or rival rulers.

- ◆ The first Ottoman rulers, Osman and Orhan, each had a principal wife, who presided over an austere court. Murat I had multiple wives and a harem, in the manner of Abbasid caliphs. Bayezid Yıldırım had many consorts, most of whom were slaves. A consort giving birth to a son was sent off to a provincial city, where her son would be trained as a ruler.
- ◆ Ottoman succession was patrilineal, and only one son could inherit the throne. The House of Osman never lacked a male heir, as did many European monarchies. Instead, there were usually too many capable heirs, and there was always the risk of scheming and civil war. Daughters were married to leading ministers or governors so that they might exercise considerable power through their husbands.
- ◆ Following the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Bayezid Yıldırım had ordered the strangling of his half-brothers to prevent civil war. Selim Yavuz went even further, mandating that future sultans were required by law to execute male relatives who could dispute the throne.
- ◆ In 1533 or 1534, a Ruthenian slave girl and concubine of Suleiman rose to become the sultan's principal wife. In Western sources, she is known as Roxelana.
- ◆ The daughter of an Orthodox priest, Roxelana was captured by Tatar raiders around 1517 and sold in Kaffa. Eventually, she found her way into the imperial harem at the end of the reign of Selim Yavuz. She was renamed Hürrem



("Cheerful One") because of her playful disposition, and she quickly came to the attention of Suleiman.

- ◆ Suleiman fell passionately in love with Hürrem. At the time, the sultan's heir apparent was his eldest surviving son, Mustafa, born in 1515 of Mahidevran, another of Suleiman's concubines. After clashing with Hürrem, Mahidevran was sent off to Manisa, where Mustafa would be trained to govern. Suleiman then broke with nearly two centuries of Ottoman protocol by exalting Hürrem to the rank of legal wife and adviser.
- ◆ Hürrem bore Suleiman four sons who reached maturity—Mehmet, Selim, Bayezid, and Cihangir—and the sultan's only daughter, Mihrimah. Hürrem schemed one of her sons on the throne instead of Mustafa, and she soon gained a reputation for intrigue. She worked in tandem with Suleiman's viziers to undermine Mustafa's reputation.
- ◆ Mustafa commanded powerful supporters among the Janissaries and the timariots of Anatolia who controlled the countryside. Mustafa was also married to Mihrünnisa, the daughter of Hayreddin Barbarossa. In 1536, Mustafa was transferred from Manisa to Amasya, while Hürrem's eldest son, Mehmet, assumed the governorship of Manisa. Mustafa took the transfer as a demotion, and Mehmet died soon after, in 1543.
- ◆ After Mehmet's death, Hürrem promoted her third son, Bayezid, over Mustafa. Hürrem's second son, Selim, was viewed as indolent and lazy. Her youngest, Cihangir, was sickly; he later died of smallpox. Selim succeeded as sultan almost by default. Suleiman's daughter, Mihrimah, later assumed her mother's position as counselor after Hürrem's death in 1559.
- ◆ In 1553, at the outset of the third Persian campaign, Grand Vizier Rüstem Paşa deviously contrived the death of Mustafa. Rüstem Paşa summoned Mustafa to join the imperial army at Ereğli, but represented to Suleiman that Mustafa, in league with Shah Tahmasp,

was plotting rebellion. Suleiman received Mustafa into his tent and then ordered his execution.

- ◆ Bayezid, Hürrem's second son, was later driven to actual rebellion. He was defeated by his younger brother Selim at Konya on May 31, 1559. Bayezid fled to the Safavid court at Qazvin, where Shah Tahmasp extorted concessions from Suleiman, including the reinstatement of the Treaty of Amasya. In return, the shah turned Bayezid over to Ottoman envoys. Bayezid and his sons were executed on September 25, 1561.
- ◆ Suleiman thus bequeathed the empire to his least qualified son. Many historians have seen the seeds of Ottoman decline in these lurid court politics and the accession of Selim II, known as "the Sot." However, the sordid events leading to Selim's succession hardly made Ottoman decline inevitable; Suleiman's administrative successes had assured order and prosperity for the vast majority of the empire's subjects, enabling them to endure weak sultans.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What accounted for Suleiman's initial successes? How did the strategic situation change in both central Europe and Iran in the mid-16th century? What was the significance of the naval war in the Mediterranean?
2. Why should Suleiman be still remembered as one of the greatest sultans? What were his enduring achievements?

SUGGESTED READING

Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*.

Sultans in Topkapi, 1566–1648

The sultans from Selim II to Ibrahim are remembered as ineffective rulers who compromised the governance of the Ottoman Empire, allowing free rein to venal viziers and scheming ladies of the harem. The period is often dubbed the “sultanate of women,” and it is epitomized by the ingeniously devious Kösem, a Greek slave in the harem, who rose to dominate court politics for 40 years. Despite popular characterization of this period as one of general decline, these palace intrigues had little effect on the prosperity of the empire.

THE WOMEN

- ◆ The period between 1566 and 1648 is often dubbed the “sultanate of women” because either the sultan’s mother, the *valide sultan*, or his principal consort, the *haseki sultan*, exercised tight control over the harem and thereby influenced the sultan and the divan. The period is thus often seen as one of decline from the zenith under Suleiman the Magnificent.
- ◆ The harem and the imperial palace of Topkapi were major economic and social institutions in the capital. A forceful *valide sultan* or *haseki sultan* could wield great influence at court. She needed not only to control the other women in the harem, but also to ally with members of the divan, officers of the Janissaries, and the eunuch who administered the harem.

- ◆ The *valide sultan* or *haseki sultan* often provided petitioners with access to the sultan. They were respected for their piety, often distributing money at imperial ceremonies or endowing charitable foundations.
- ◆ The period from 1566 to 1648 saw the accession of nine different sultans, all of whom either died prematurely or ruled ineffectively. During this period, the divan was often swollen with too many members, and there was rapid turnover of grand viziers. As a result, the dominant lady within the harem gained influence, often secretly listening to the deliberations of the divan and advising the sultan.
- ◆ Selim II's wife Nurbanu Sultan controlled the harem as *haseki sultan* and then as *valide sultan* under her son Murat III. Her daughter-in-law and rival, Safiye Sultan, only succeeded to control of the harem with Nurbanu's death.
- ◆ Safiye Sultan had far more influence with her son, Mehmet III, and her grandson, Ahmet I. In 1603, Safiye shrewdly prevented the execution of Ahmet's younger brother Mustafa, because she doubted that Ahmet would survive long. She was correct.
- ◆ Kösem Sultan, the wife of Ahmet I, survived her husband and dominated court politics for the next 40 years. She took charge of the education of the princes, the future sultans Mustafa and Osman II, but was forced to retire when each succeeded as sultan because neither was her blood relation. Mustafa was the son of Mehmet III and an Abkhazian concubine, and Osman II was the son of Ahmet I and the stunning consort Mahfiruz Hatice Sultan, who challenged Kösem for control of the harem.
- ◆ Kösem reemerged as regent and counselor of her own sons, Murat IV and the unbalanced Ibrahim. Kösem was forced into retirement when she intrigued to overthrow Ibrahim, but she put her grandson Mehmet IV on the throne after Ibrahim was deposed by mutinous Janissaries.



Topkapı Palace

- ◆ In 1651, Kösem was quietly murdered, perhaps on the orders of Turhan Hatice Sultan, a Ruthenian concubine who had entered the harem at age 12 and went on to enjoy rank under her son Mehmet IV.

THE SULTANS

- ◆ Selim II knew that he was sultan by default after 35 years of intrigue and civil war. He chose to reside in Edirne, distancing himself from Topkapı.
- ◆ The scale and complexity of imperial government and ceremony had risen to an extent that made it dangerous for sultans to remove themselves from the capital for lengthy wars on distant frontiers.
- ◆ In 1570, Selim overrode the objections of his grand vizier and broke the Ottoman Empire's treaty with Venice to conquer Cyprus. Selim

was partly motivated by the need to project his legitimacy, but Ottoman strategy in the eastern Mediterranean also demanded control of the island.

- ◆ This war drove Venice into an alliance with King Philip II of Spain in a new Holy League sponsored by Pope Pius V.
- ◆ On October 7, 1571, off Lepanto, the league navy annihilated the Ottoman fleet in the greatest clash of galleys ever fought. Although Selim ordered a new fleet constructed within a year, Ottoman naval power waned thereafter.
- ◆ Murat III was the first sultan to mistake ceremony and Topkapı as the seat of power, but his son Mehmet III resumed an active role in the affairs of state.
- ◆ Murat III had governed Manisa during the reign of his father. Once he ascended the divan, however, he seldom left Topkapı. He busied himself with the harem and attended scrupulously to his daily prayers.
- ◆ Murat lacked the capacity to rule and feared that plots against him would arise, even though his five brothers had been executed upon his accession. Palace intrigue influenced policy, to the delight and disapproval of contemporary historians Mustafa Ali and Mustafa Selaniki.
- ◆ In 1593, border incidents escalated into a war against Holy Roman emperor Rudolf II. During the conflict, later referred to as the Long Turkish War or the Thirteen Years' War, the Ottoman field army suffered several embarrassing defeats.
- ◆ At the Battle of Keresztes, Murat's eldest son and successor, Mehmet III, panicked and quit the field even though the Ottoman army had won. Thereafter, Mehmet declined to campaign on grounds of ill health, and he was accused of being a voluptuary with a savage nature.

- ◆ Ahmet I, who ascended the throne at age 13, proved pious and ineffective, and was dependent on his ministers and powerful consort Kösem Sultan.
- ◆ Ahmet was tediously pious, excelling in poetry and calligraphy, and he used architecture instead of military victory to assert Ottoman power. He took no part in concluding the Thirteen Years' War, which ended with the 1606 Treaty of Zsitvatorok, or in responding to Safavid threats.
- ◆ In 1617, Ahmet died suddenly at the age of 27. His sons Osman and Murat were considered too young to rule, and a succession crisis ensued. Mustafa, then 26, was placed on the throne. But Mustafa proved himself unfit to rule even as a figurehead, and he was soon replaced by the 14-year-old Osman II.
- ◆ Osman was well educated, precocious, and impatient, and was determined to rule effectively. He led the imperial army in a campaign against Poland that ended in the unsuccessful siege of Chotin. He blamed the Janissaries and his viziers for the defeat, and he was murdered in a mutiny in 1622.
- ◆ The grand vizier, divan, and Janissaries hastily restored Mustafa to the throne, who by this time was so deranged that he searched the palace for Ahmet, his late brother. Kösem soon negotiated to put her 11-year-old son, Murat IV, on the throne.
- ◆ Murat IV was as precocious as his half-brother Osman II, and even more successful. He distinguished himself militarily in a war against the Safavids from 1623 to 1639. Murat personally led two successful campaigns, capturing Yerevan in 1635 and Baghdad in 1638, and became the first Ottoman sultan to win a significant victory since Suleiman the Magnificent. He concluded the war on favorable terms by the 1639 Treaty of Zuhab.

- ◆ Murat IV's premature death resulted in yet another succession crisis. He had left no male heirs, and the only option was to proclaim Ibrahim, Murat's unbalanced brother, as sultan. Ibrahim feared for his life, having witnessed the strangling of four of his half-brothers in 1623.
- ◆ In 1645, Ibrahim was persuaded to declare war on Venice. But the Venetian garrison in Candia defied the Ottoman army in this sixth war between the Ottomans and the Venetians. The Venetian navy swept the Aegean and blockaded the entrance to the Dardanelles, turning the war into a costly political and fiscal liability for their Ottoman opponents.
- ◆ In 1648, a general uprising by the Janissaries and ulema led to rioting in Constantinople. Ibrahim was overthrown and later strangled, and his grand vizier was torn to pieces by the mob. Kösem Sultan's six-year-old grandson, Mehmet IV, was proclaimed sultan.
- ◆ The usual intrigue resulted in the murder of Kösem Sultan in 1651, probably the connivance of her daughter-in-law, Turhan Hatice Sultan. In 1656, the respected, elderly Köprülü Mehmet Paşa assumed the office of grand vizier. He restored political stability to the Porte and ended the ruinous war with Venice.

Ahmet I proved pious and ineffective, and was dependent on his ministers and powerful consort Kösem Sultan.

THE VERDICT

- ◆ The popular characterization of the sultanate of women as a period of general decline is perhaps an unfair one. Scheming factions at Topkapı unbalanced sultans and ruined several others, but the secluded palace did project the legitimacy of the imperial government.

- ◆ The lurid politics of succession during this period never resulted in a civil war, and the House of Osman never lacked a male heir.
- ◆ Palace revolutions in Constantinople had minimal impact on the Ottoman Empire as a whole, which enjoyed prosperity and security until at least the end of the 18th century. Whatever the personal failings of the sultans, the diverse communities of the Ottoman Empire lived on remarkably good terms—quite a contrast to the contemporary French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years' War.
- ◆ The institutions of the Porte established by Mehmet II and Suleiman the Magnificent gave a fundamental stability to the empire that could withstand the eccentricities and flaws of individual sultans.
- ◆ The awesome ceremonies and grounds of Topkapı gave legitimacy to the sultan's officials and awed foreign envoys, vassal rulers, and petitioners from the provinces. Graduates from the madrassas staffed the secretarial and financial offices, ensuring a routine, professional governance.
- ◆ Several sultans, notably Murat III and Ahmet I, were patrons of the arts and Islamic institutions. Their patronage enriched the life of the capital and promoted an image of grandeur.
- ◆ The sultans and their divans were constrained by political, military, and financial changes in the late 16th and 17th centuries that affected all contemporary states, but the servants of the caliph were nevertheless able to respond effectively. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was the premier international power throughout the 17th century, and it remained a formidable state following defeats from 1683 to 1699.

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Murat III and Ahmet I,
were patrons of the arts and
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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Did the decline of the sultan's personal control over affairs of state endanger the governing of the Ottoman Empire? How did the institutions of the Porte assure sound government and stability?
2. Why was Murat IV able to end the so-called sultanate of women? How did his reign mark a revival in Ottoman power?

SUGGESTED READING

Neumann, "Political and Diplomatic Developments."

Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*.

The Sultan-Caliph and His Servants

From 1517, the Ottoman sultan ruled as both ghazi warrior and caliph of the Sunni Islamic world. The sultan thus played two related but distinct roles on behalf of his subjects. As sultan, he ruled a diverse empire through his servants. As caliph, he administered justice in accordance with *Şeriat*—Muslim religious law—and operated in tandem with the Shaikh al-Islam, the senior mufti of the Muslim religious establishment. In the provinces, Ottoman governors, judges, and financial agents ruled according to the same principles as the administration in the capital.

SULTAN AND CALIPH

- ◆ The sultans of the House of Osman were heirs to Near Eastern kingship in their administration, ceremony, and commitment to an ideology of justice. The Ottoman sultanate represented the culmination of earlier Near Eastern kingships, notably the Abbasid caliphate and Sassanid Persia.
- ◆ The sultan was charged by God with administering justice. To do so, the sultan relied on his servants, who were collectively known as the *askeri*. Included among the *askeri* were the *kapıkulu*, the sultan's military slave force; members of the *ulema*, a group of Muslim theologians and scholars; *timariots*, Muslim gentry who held their *timars* in return for military service to the sultan; and the sultan's officials.

- ◆ Sultans articulated elaborate religious and dynastic ceremonies to exalt their role as guardians of justice. Theaters of ceremonial projection included Topkapı and the domed mosques of Constantinople.
- ◆ As caliph, the Ottoman sultan upheld *Şeriat* and protected the privileges of dhimmi (Christians and Jews), but he never possessed a religious establishment comparable to those of contemporary Christian monarchies.
- ◆ The sultans of Bursa had inherited the ulema, a three-tiered hierarchy of Muslim religious experts. Foremost among the ulema were the muftis, senior scholars who were qualified to render independent opinion on a subject involving *Şeriat*, and who could issue nonbinding pronouncements known as fatwas.
- ◆ Muftis followed one of four Sunni schools of thought on the interpretation of Islam: the Hanafi school, the Hanbali school, the Shafi'i school, and the Maliki school. These schools offered varying opinions on topics ranging from divorce to coffee, but they did not oppose the Porte in any way.
- ◆ Next in rank after muftis were *mudarrisun* ("doctors"), who could teach, but not render opinions. The final tier of the ulema was composed of faqih ("masters"), who had attained sufficient mastery to advance to the higher levels of learning.
- ◆ In the 14th century, the most esteemed mufti was styled the Shaikh al-Islam. The Shaikh al-Islam, who was independent of the sultan, regularly attended sessions of the divan and was nearly equal in authority to the sultan's grand vizier. For all his religious authority, however, the Shaikh al-Islam was not a member of the sultan's government, nor did he head up his own establishment.
- ◆ Madrassas were religious schools whose graduates entered the *umma* or pursued careers in the sultan's service. The madrassas' entrance requirements, fees, examinations, and curricula were

regulated. Mehmet II organized the madrassas into a hierarchy of eight levels; three additional levels were later added by Suleiman the Magnificent.

THE PORTE

- ◆ The sultans from Mehmet II to Suleiman the Magnificent established a professional administration in Constantinople. Called the Porte by Westerners, this central administration implemented the sultan's will throughout the empire.
- ◆ Since the late 14th century, Ottoman sultans had staffed their administration with slaves recruited from the *devşirme*—Christian youths who had been converted to Islam and drafted into the sultan's service—and captives taken in war. The brightest and handsomest Christian youths taken in the *devşirme* were assigned to the palace school at Topkapı, where they received an excellent education. These young men were destined for the highest offices in the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Slavery and conversion to Islam served to assimilate the conquered and allowed for the advancement of freedmen. From the late 16th century on, many of the *kapıkulu* acquired property, married, and had families. By the time the *devşirme* was abandoned in the early 17th century, a caste of these families—Turkish speakers and Muslims from birth—had emerged to provide servants for the sultan.
- ◆ Members of the *kapıkulu* destined to serve the sultan were separated for training into one of two services: the inner service and the outer service. Those trained for the inner service were permitted to pass beyond the Gate of Felicity into the fourth, innermost court of Topkapı. New arrivals to the inner service were enrolled as pages and given the best Muslim education. Many spent their lives within Topkapı, in the sultan's service. The brightest served outside the palace as ministers, generals, and provincial governors.



Divan

- ◆ Those of the outer service trained to be Janissaries, engineers, officials, and skilled workers necessary to sustain the capital. This education guaranteed the Porte a professional class of expert officials and elite soldiers with shared ethoses, training, and devotion to the sultan.
- ◆ The grand vizier, who rose by merit, acted as the sultan's deputy. Beginning in 1566, the grand vizier also took charge of foreign policy and the central administration.
- ◆ Sultans from Selim II on were increasingly occupied by caliphal religious and ceremonial duties. They rarely went on campaign and were seldom present when the grand vizier, the lesser viziers, and other members of the divan met to answer petitions and deal with policies of state.
- ◆ Members of the divan reached decisions through discussion rather than consensus, and by consensus rather than vote. Although the

sultan usually did not attend meetings of the divan, he could veto any decision made by the council. He also had the power to remove any member of the divan at any time.

- ◆ The empire's provinces in the Balkans and Asia Minor were thoroughly Ottoman in their administration. These core provinces were staffed by officials plucked from the Ottoman field army or the capital's central administration. In central Europe, the vassal principalities of Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia were ruled by their own Christian leaders. The Arab provinces of Iraq, the Levant, Egypt, and the Maghreb retained their preexisting bureaucratic and social organizations.
- ◆ Provinces were composed of several smaller divisions known as sanjaks. Each sanjak was assigned a financial secretary, who prepared the cadastral surveys from which land taxes were calculated and reported directly to the sultan.
- ◆ Ottoman tax registers of the 16th and early 17th centuries were prepared with astonishing detail and accuracy. Current scholarship holds an efficient collection by the standards of the period—perhaps 75 percent of assessed value—and an acceptable incidence of taxation.
- ◆ Occasionally, protests and tax revolts would erupt in the provinces. These were usually the result of corrupt officials, or of tax increases brought on by war, plague or famine. Much of the policing and day-to-day governing at the local level was left to timariots.

DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER

- ◆ It is often argued that the efficient provincial administration of Suleiman the Magnificent declined in the 17th and 18th centuries as the Porte shifted from direct taxation to tax farming. Recent scholarship, however, has revised this view in several respects.

- ◆ During this period, a new group of local elites gained power and influence in the provinces by purchasing tax contracts. These local elites, known as *ayan*, also served as patrons and provincial officials. In the later 16th century, Janissaries stationed in provincial capitals often became arbiters, and cemented ties of marriage, hospitality, and friendship with the *ayan*. A new provincial elite had emerged.
- ◆ Decentralization of power at the provincial level has often been cited as an institutional weakness of the Ottoman Empire and a factor in the empire's eventual decline. Far from weakening the power of the Porte, however, decentralization spared the sultan's treasury the costs of direct administration at a time of rising inflation. The new local elites, while local in their wealth and power, remained linked to the capital and thoroughly Ottoman in their ethoses.
- ◆ Corruption and arbitrary rule can, as always, be identified in certain aspects of Ottoman governance during certain periods in the empire's history. But the empire as a whole enjoyed remarkably sound administration until the late 18th century, when the emergence of modern nationalism began to undermine traditional ties between provincial elites and the capital.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How well did the government of the Porte meet the needs of the sultan-caliph? Why was Topkapı so central to its success? What was the role of *Şeriat* in Ottoman state and society?
2. How justly were the cities and provinces of the Ottoman Empire ruled?

SUGGESTED READING

Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*.
Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Timariots, Peasants, and Pastoralists

In the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, the Ottoman Empire, which covered more than 1 million square miles across three continents, was a remarkably successful agrarian economy. Agricultural production increased rapidly during this period, easily sustaining the empire's comparatively slow growth in population. This success came a cost, however, as the Ottoman Empire entered World War I with a preindustrial economy.

AN AGRARIAN ECONOMY

- ◆ Between 1500 and 1914, eighty percent of the population of the Ottoman Empire was engaged in agriculture or otherwise involved in the production of consumables. The empire covered more than 1 million square miles, however, and economic activity varied considerably from region to region.
- ◆ The Balkan provinces and Egypt each represented 25 percent of the empire's population and revenues, and Christian vassal principalities in Europe rendered significant tribute in coin and commodities. Constantinople was the empire's largest market, drawing on the produce and products of the countryside.
- ◆ Dry farming was practiced in the Aegean world and along the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. Grains were sown in the fall, nurtured on winter rains, and harvested from May to June, depending on local

conditions. Villagers also cultivated olive trees, fruit trees, and vines, and usually kept sheep, goats, and some cattle.

- ◆ In the Balkans and the inland regions of western Anatolia, conditions were favorable for the cultivation of grains, but harsh winters prevented the cultivation of olive trees and citrus fruits. Pigs were the prime source of protein in the overwhelmingly Christian Balkan countryside.
- ◆ Egypt and the regions surrounding the lower Tigris and Euphrates practiced irrigated farming that yielded enormous surpluses of grain. Pastoralists and semipastoralists could be found throughout the empire. They played an important part in economic life, primarily because they bred camels, the chief instrument of overland transportation.
- ◆ Throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, the overall size and composition of the Ottoman population was relatively stable. But during the second half of the 19th century, Ottoman population growth began to lag behind that of contemporary European states.
- ◆ The population of the Ottoman Empire in 1500—including core provinces, Christian vassal states, and allied Muslim states—was probably around 22 to 24 million. Over the next 300 years, the Ottomans suffered significant territorial losses, and the empire's total population approached 26 million. Further territorial losses between 1878 and 1913 reduced the total population to 18 to 20 million.
- ◆ Between 1500 and 1914, the composition of the labor force and economic activity did not change. Eighty percent of the population either lived in villages or practiced a pastoral way of life. As late as 1914, the production of foodstuffs and rural craft products still comprised the vast majority of the empire's revenue, and most Ottoman subjects remained vulnerable to the vicissitudes of seasons and weather.

- ◆ In 1915, a plague of locusts consumed the harvests of Syria and central Anatolia. As a result, many Ottoman subjects faced ruinous food prices, shortages, or starvation at the height of World War I. And because the empire's economy was largely preindustrial, poor harvests directly reduced the Porte's revenues and hampered its ability to wage war.

THE PROVINCIAL ELITE

- ◆ Ottoman sultans distributed land rights primarily to meet fiscal and military demands. Timariots were granted military tenures called timars; in return, timariots agreed to furnish the empire's provincial cavalry. Timariots formed a Muslim gentry and enjoyed the usufruct of a variety of properties. Timars were not hereditary, however. Sultans repossessed and redistributed timars on a large scale into the 19th century.
- ◆ Timariots also played important economic and social roles in the countryside. They developed their estates, sponsored colonization, maintained order, and acted as patrons and arbiters in rural society.
- ◆ In the early 17th century, the Porte turned over timariots' rights to collect taxes to *ayan*—tax farmers who bid for the right to collect taxes. This shift relieved the Porte of the cost of hiring a central bureaucracy, but it carried important consequences for the rural economy. Instead of setting aside local goods for export to new markets, the *ayan* directed most produce and rural handicraft commodities to nearby cities and towns.
- ◆ Military demands, poor harvests, and destruction wrought by raiders often forced peasants to borrow against future harvests to pay their taxes, thus indebting them to the *ayan*. Such debts were inheritable, and frequently trapped peasant families in a cycle of interest and taxes.

- ◆ Between 1500 and 1800, rural life varied considerably from region to region. Nevertheless, most peasants and pastoralists pursued the economic activities of their forebears. During this 300-year period, peasants exploited their lands without undue interference from the Porte. Houses, agricultural buildings, gardens, orchards, vegetable patches, and livestock were all considered private property.
- ◆ The Porte required that peasants seek permission from local officials before emigrating, but this restriction was widely evaded and difficult to enforce. Many young Muslim men headed to the capital or to provincial cities, where they joined guilds or worked as wage laborers. Others joined companies of *sekbans*, irregular troops who often doubled as brigands. But there was no mass relocation of peasants to urban centers, a development that in Europe proved vital to the Industrial Revolution.
- ◆ In the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Fertile Crescent, villagers began using animal manure as fuel over wood and charcoal. The introduction of foods from the New World—including maize, potatoes, and turkey—altered farming patterns throughout the Ottoman Empire and significantly improved rural diets.
- ◆ Tobacco in particular became a major cash crop. Tobacco smoking became a feature of urban coffee and wine houses, which were usually operated by dhimmi. Tobacco plantations were established on the shores of the Black Sea. Ploughs and other agricultural tools did not change significantly, but harvests were improved through superior management, crop rotation, and widespread adoption of the three-field system.

Ottoman sultans distributed land rights primarily to meet fiscal and military demands.



Tobacco was a major cash crop in the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ Not all changes in land use were beneficial, however. The 17th and 18th centuries witnessed a shift from plains to mountain settlements in the Balkans, Anatolia, and northern Syria, often as a result of revolts, increased military demands, overgrazing, and epidemics.
- ◆ This internal migration transformed linguistic and ethnic patterns. Albanians, for example, migrated into Kosovo and Macedonia to exploit plains stock raising. In eastern Anatolia, Turkmen and Kurdish pastoralists expanded their grazing lands at the expense of Armenians and Syrians.
- ◆ For the Porte, this shift in settlement put many Christian and Muslim peasants in mountainous areas that were beyond the reach of Ottoman officials. Toward the end of the 18th century, many of these mountain populations armed themselves, and began to defy Ottoman rule.

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

- ◆ The agrarian economy of the Ottoman Empire was resilient, and it supported the demands of the Porte for more than 300 years. In the 19th century, however, the Ottoman economy came under increasing pressure from European economic competition.
- ◆ The ruling Muslim classes in Constantinople and the provincial cities stressed the welfare of the community; they saw no need to amass capital for investment in superior production or distribution of goods. The Ottoman economy was thus rooted on principles different from those driving European economic expansion.
- ◆ In the cities of northern Italy, the Rhineland, and the Netherlands, economic activity was geared toward ever-expanding domestic and international markets. This competition drove technological innovation, leading to improvements in production and distribution on a mass scale.
- ◆ Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europeans debated the merits of mercantilism versus free trade in securing new markets. The latter position won out, and free trade, championed by Great Britain, proved to have a detrimental impact on the Ottoman rural economy.
- ◆ The Ottoman Empire exported only basic commodities to Europe, and imported European manufactured goods. The empire's rural handicraft economy—unable to compete with mass-produced, inexpensive, and often better-quality goods imported from Europe—rapidly declined.
- ◆ Another Ottoman industry adversely affected by trade with Europe was textile manufacturing. Looms and other equipment had to be imported from England and France, and native factories weren't able to keep pace with technological improvements. Despite protective tariffs, the Ottoman textile industry faltered.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How successful was the agricultural economy of the Ottoman Empire in the period from 1500 to 1800? What factors promoted prosperity? How did these factors change after 1800?
2. How oppressive were the Porte's demands on peasants? How did timariots and ayans act as intermediaries between the rural population and the Porte?

SUGGESTED READING

Faroqhi, "Rural Life."

Hütteroth, "Ecology of the Ottoman Lands."

Inalick and Quataert, *The Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*.

Trade, Money, and Cities

In addition to traditional agriculture, the prosperity of the Ottoman Empire rested on its cities and the profits of long-distance, regional, and local trade. Cities generated market demand that stimulated trade in local and regional foodstuffs, and manufactured goods imported from Europe had a major impact on the empire's economic welfare.

THE ROLE OF TRADE

- ◆ The role of trade in the Ottoman Empire has been studied as the main index of the empire's economic success and the prime cause for the decline of the Porte in the 19th century. The Ottoman Empire in 1550 embraced three continents, and its numerous cities generated regional and local trade. In total population, including Christian vassal kingdoms, the Ottoman Empire had between 22 and 24 million residents.
- ◆ Ottoman cities provided markets at handsome bedestans. Mosque complexes also included a number of local markets. Many villagers traveled to urban markets weekly to buy groceries, building materials, and other items.
- ◆ Urban life exacted a high mortality rate. In the early 17th century, epidemics ravaged the empire's population, and peasants migrated to cities to replenish losses. These migrations acted as a demographic safety valve for the countryside.
- ◆ As late as the 19th century, regional and local trade comprised the majority of commerce in the Ottoman Empire. Constantinople, as

the location of the Porte and the center of international trade, also played a key role in the empire's economy.

- ◆ Constantinople's architectural transformation between the reigns of Mehmet II and Suleiman the Magnificent stimulated regional trade and economic activity in surrounding regions. The town of Nicaea/Iznik, for example, supplied the tiles used to decorate the great imperial mosques of the capital. The principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia supplied Constantinople with grain, salt, mutton, woolens, and leather as part of their annual tribute to the empire.
- ◆ Each year, fleets of cargo ships departed from Sinop, Samsun, and Trabzon to purchase grain for the capital. In 1550, Constantinople's wheat requirement was 73,000 tonnes (200 tonnes per day). Ottoman officials fixed grain prices, operated state bakeries, and distributed bread to the destitute through mosques or charitable foundations.
- ◆ The role of long-distance trade—especially the luxuries exchanged along the celebrated Silk Road—has often been dismissed as of minor economic importance because it failed to generate capital formation and industrialization. But taxes and duties on this trade generated 20 to 25 percent of the Porte's annual revenues.
- ◆ The Porte and the provincial Ottoman elite were regulators, consumers, and promoters of trade. Long-distance trade was left to dhimmi—Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, in particular—with ties to coreligionists in cities outside the empire. Dhimmi also participated in tax-farming contracts and handled certain aspects of regional and local commerce within the empire.

CONSTANTINOPLE: THE OTTOMAN QUEEN OF CITIES

- ◆ For 350 years, Constantinople, the Ottoman queen of cities, emerged as the nexus of the major Eurasian long-distance trade routes: the western arm of the Silk Road, northern trade routes into eastern

Europe and across the Eurasian Steppes, seaborne commerce in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea, and commerce of the Mediterranean Sea.

- ◆ At the beginning of the 15th century, Bursa, the original Ottoman capital, replaced Konya as the main terminus of caravans traveling the Silk Road from Tabriz in northwestern Iran. Raw silk was exported through the port of Mudanya to the island of Chios, and then on to Italian, French, and Spanish markets. The price of raw silk was remarkably stable during the 15th and 16th centuries. The trade, however, was repeatedly disrupted by the Ottoman-Safavid wars to the detriment of all parties.
- ◆ In 1514, Selim I placed an embargo on imported raw Iranian silk, but enforcement was difficult, and Suleiman the Magnificent rescinded

The price of raw silk was remarkably stable during the 15th and 16th centuries.



the law. The Safavids soon developed new routes that bypassed the Ottoman Empire altogether.

- ◆ Peace and trade returned to Iran and the Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639, so the silk trade resumed and the market of Bursa quickly revived. By this time, however, the Silk Road took second place to an oceanic world economy.
- ◆ The port of Kaffa on the southern shores of Crimea linked Constantinople to the vast northern trade network northwest across the rivers of Russia and lands of the Baltic Sea and northeast to the Eurasian Steppes. Kaffa exported foodstuffs that sustained the growing population of Constantinople, and it also fed the slave markets at Constantinople and Bursa with captives taken from Ukrainians, Ruthenians, and Circassians.
- ◆ More than 3 million slaves between 1475 and 1783 were sold at Kaffa for markets in the Ottoman Empire. This trade in slaves sustained the Tatar Khanate of Crimea and provided a major source of labor for the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ In the 16th century, the Portuguese—and then, in the 17th century, the Dutch and English—gained control over the oceanic trade to India and East Asia. The emergence of this oceanic trade did not abruptly end the import of spices from India, but importation did diminish considerably. Prices for pepper and other spices surged whenever the Portuguese imposed an embargo.
- ◆ The Porte reaped major profits from the taxes and customs duties generated by long-distance trade, and even though this trade constituted only a part of the empire's total trade, it was the state's main source of ready specie.

*Peace and trade returned
to Iran and the Ottoman
Empire under the Treaty of
Zuhab in 1639.*

- ◆ Ottoman monetary weakness led to fiscal crises that compromised defense in the 17th and 18th centuries, but it did not necessarily represent a decline in economic prosperity or flaws in the organization and conduct of trade within the Ottoman Empire.

THE BRITISH AND OTTOMAN MARKETS

- ◆ British penetration of Ottoman markets, a process that was laid out in the Commercial Treaty of 1838, marked a decisive change in the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and its western European trading partners.
- ◆ The Porte traditionally issued capitulations to favored foreign merchants who were classified as friends of Islam and were therefore allowed to conduct commercial activities within the empire. The capitulations in the 19th century came to be regarded as a legal device for the European great powers to dominate the trade and banking of the Ottoman Empire so that they were abolished as an instrument of colonialism by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.
- ◆ In 1535, however, Suleiman the Magnificent issued his capitulation to the French from a position of strength. These grants of commercial concessions, in the case of the capitulation of 1535, were linked to a military alliance with Francis I against the common Hapsburg foe.
- ◆ Murat III issued capitulations to the Dutch in 1579 and to the English in 1580, whose factors (or agents) could establish factories, consulates, and contracts with Ottoman merchants. Although both Protestant states were foes to Habsburg Spain, the sultan was more interested in the economic benefits, especially tin (vital for gun casting), weapons, gunpowder, and mechanical devices.
- ◆ The English merchants, with superior oceangoing vessels, ousted the Venetians in the carrying trade to the Ottoman Empire, and the heavily armed ships with superior speed could fight off

corsairs. In addition, the English brought their textiles and everyday manufactured goods and therefore initiated a change in the volume and nature of international trade.

- ◆ Between the early 17th century and the late 19th century, international trade was no longer in luxury goods or bulk foodstuff and textiles but in an ever-improving range of manufactured goods. In effect, the English had introduced the Ottoman elites to what evolved into consumerism. After 1720, the English strategically shifted their efforts to India, yielding primacy in long-distance Ottoman trade to the French.
- ◆ The French received a new capitulation in 1740, whereby French merchants entered Egypt for grains and cotton, which were shipped to Marseilles. French textile imports captured a significant part of the Ottoman urban market, but domestic handicraft production supplied the needs of villages and most of the urban residents.
- ◆ The invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798 and 1799 led to the return of the British to Ottoman markets. The Ottoman-British Commercial Treaty of 1838 was the first modern trade agreement negotiated by the Porte, and it replaced previous capitulations, which had expired in 1834. British merchants received the lowest customs rate, allowing them to compete successfully against Ottoman and other foreign merchants.
- ◆ The volume of imported manufactured goods rose dramatically between 1815 and 1876, at an annual growth of 5.5 percent. By 1900, 75 percent of Ottoman imported goods were manufactured ones from Great Britain, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, while more than two-thirds of Ottoman exports, raw materials, went to the same four countries. Economically, the Ottoman Empire had fallen to the level of a hypo-colony.
- ◆ This rising volume of trade enabled the Porte to collect customs duties, which were raised nearly to 15 percent to obtain revenues

rather than to protect incipient industrialization. The revenues, however, went to meet the interest on the Ottoman national debt administered by a commission of foreign investors (Public Debt Administration) set up in 1881 after the Porte had defaulted in 1876.

- ◆ Much traditional economic activity continued. This was well documented on the resilient handicraft textile production at Aleppo, which continued to serve its domestic market in the 19th century.
- ◆ Neither the Porte nor its wealthy classes had the capital to fund a shipbuilding industry turning out competitive steamships after 1840 or railways after 1865. As a result, the Ottoman Empire entered World War I without the industry and transportation network to fight a modern war.
- ◆ The success of British free trade in the 19th century underscored two fundamental shifts in what was henceforth a world economy. First, as production and distribution of mass goods increased, capital accumulation and reinvestment became essential to sustain

View of Constantinople



economic progress—a concept foreign to a traditional society such as the Ottoman Empire. Second, the emergence of a global world between the 15th and 18th centuries marginalized the position of the Mediterranean world, over which the Porte had fought so determinedly to acquire control.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How was trade organized and conducted in the Ottoman Empire in the period from 1500 to 1800? What were the respective roles of long-distance international trade, regional trade within the Ottoman Empire, and local trade between city and countryside?
2. What accounted for the success of the European penetration of Ottoman markets between the late 16th and early 19th centuries? What were the consequences for the Ottoman Empire?

SUGGESTED READING

Inalick and Quataert, *The Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*.

Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism*.

Arabs under the Ottoman Caliph

The spectacular conquests of Selim I and Suleiman the Magnificent brought most of the Arabic-speaking world under the Porte's authority. Ottoman sultans had a provisional loyalty from their Arab subjects as long as they ruled piously and successfully. Ottoman rule proved successful for nearly three centuries, and this period was, in many ways, the climax of the historic Islamic caliphates.

ARAB LOYALTY

- ◆ The Arabic-speaking populations of the Ottoman Empire occupied more than half of the empire's landmass, but they did not form a conscious nationality but rather identified by religion. Ottoman officials never defined the various provinces where Arabic speakers dwelled as constituting a distinct ethnic or religious community.
- ◆ They used the word "Arab" to denote the Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula and the Arabic-speaking Muslim population of the western arm of the Fertile Crescent. This ill-defined region was called Arabistan, but it did not include lower Iraq or the region around Mosul. The Porte thought in terms of religious identity rather than language, and the loyalty of the Ottoman sultan's Arabic-speaking subjects was based on membership in the *umma*, the community of believers.

- ◆ With the conquest of Egypt in 1517, Selim deposed the last Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil III and assumed the office of caliph. For Arabs, however, a Turkish caliphate posed a religious and intellectual dilemma, raising questions as to the nature of the office of caliph and the qualifications to hold said office.
- ◆ This debate has persisted to today, and it has been complicated by the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate by the Turkish Parliament in 1923 and the self-proclaimed world caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State in 2014.
- ◆ Arab loyalty to the Ottoman sultan as caliph was conditioned on rule according to *Şeriat* and protection of the Holy Cities and the greater Islamic realms from Christian infidels and Shi'ite heretics. Ottoman sultans, understanding these conditions, ostentatiously publicized their victories over Christians and Shi'ites.
- ◆ During the Italo-Turkish War of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire lost control of Libya—a province of little strategic importance, but one whose loss reflected poorly on the Turkish caliph's legitimacy, as it was the first Arabic province lost to infidels in battle.

RULE OF THE PORTE

- ◆ The Porte successfully administered the diverse Arab provinces by adapting to traditional, local institutions and providing security. The Porte sent to the Arab provinces officials and soldiers who were products of the Topkapı or the madrassas of Constantinople. Professional Ottoman governors were almost invariably Balkan or Anatolian Muslims who spoke Turkish and had been trained at Topkapı. The same was true of Ottoman soldiers.
- ◆ In ruling through local institutions, the Porte made evermore use of the local elites in the Arab provinces to collect taxes and keep order. From the early 17th century, Ottoman officials used the Arabic word

ayan to describe the men who bid on tax contracts and maintained order in the cities. These notables ran society in the cities and countryside down to the end of Ottoman rule. They formed the ruling council of the city, patronized guilds, engaged in moneylending, and dominated local and regional trade.

- ◆ Over the course of the 17th century, an alliance emerged between the professional Ottoman governors, officials, and Janissaries sent from the capital with the town notables and council to administer the cities and countryside of the Arabic provinces. These consortia of local power brokers were immensely successful in maintaining order in the Arab provinces.
- ◆ The Porte tolerated a certain measure of disorder along the desert frontiers as long as taxes were paid and the hajj, pilgrimage of pious Muslims to Mecca, was not threatened. In the rugged Amanus region, for example, Ottoman officials granted titles and subsidies to achieve a balance among the warring Druse, Shi'ite, and Christian tribes.
- ◆ In governing the Holy Cities of the Hejaz, the Porte showed utmost discretion and respect to Islamic traditions. Since the 10th century, a member of the Hashemite clan, claiming descent from the Prophet, held the offices of the sharif and emir of the two Holy Cities. The Porte invested rank and titles to each Hashemite sharif whose standing and legitimacy among his fellow tribesmen was increased.
- ◆ Cairo (with a population of 300,000 to 500,000 residents) was the second city of the empire, a cultural rival to Constantinople and the former seat of powerful dynasties since the 10th century. The governors (beylerbey) numbered many of the most talented members of the kapıkulu in the 16th century, but most were

In governing the Holy Cities of the Hejaz, the Porte showed utmost discretion and respect to Islamic traditions.



Mecca

rotated out of office in six months to two years lest they grow too powerful.

- ◆ Cairo's leading families, which maintained armed retainers of Mamluks and mercenaries, kept order in the city. These powerful families clashed to obtain the mayorship and thus achieved legitimacy in the eyes of the Porte and patronage over Cairo's guilds and ulema. In villages and rural districts, leading local families likewise kept order with armed retainers.

OPPOSITION TO THE PORTE

- ◆ The Porte faced remarkably little serious opposition to its control of the Arab provinces until the early 19th century. The most serious threat was expected in Cairo, where the ruling classes shared a

conception of their city as the seat of the Mamluk sultanate and the Abbasid caliphate. But it would take the unexpected French invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the political genius of Muhammad Ali, to end Ottoman rule in Egypt and elevate Cairo once more to the position of a capital and rival to Constantinople.

- ◆ The Porte faced its greatest challenge in Arabia, arising from the most unlikely alliance of Muhammad ibn Saud and the sufi mystic Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Wahhabist warriors, mounted on camels, struck along the desert rim of the Fertile Crescent. In 1802, they captured Karbala and massacred the city's Shi'ite population. By the end of 1806, they occupied both Mecca and Medina.
- ◆ Sultans Selim III and Mahmud II together sent three different armies based at Damascus into the desert without success. In 1811, Mahmud II turned to the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to meet the Wahhabist threat.
- ◆ Muhammad Ali and his sons secured the Holy Cities, penetrated into Arabia, and captured Diriyah, ending at last the first Wahhabist state. The victory redounded to the credit of Muhammad Ali, and not to Sultan Mahmud II. The Wahhabist threat raised the first serious opposition to the legitimacy of the Turkish caliph. The Porte learned that protection of the Holy Cities was crucial to maintaining the Arab provinces.
- ◆ The greatest test of Arab loyalty came not from any outside threat but from the consequences of the Porte's own reforms to modernize its army and finances to ward off the threat of the major European powers. Reform required centralization, and starting with the reform movement of Tanzimat, Ottoman rule became evermore intrusive and demanding.
- ◆ This centralization might not have alienated the Arab ayans and intellectuals who shaped public opinion in the 19th century. Many looked with optimism to the Ottoman Parliaments of 1876 and 1908,

but each time this constitutional experiment failed and, in so doing, widened the chasm between Constantinople and the remaining Arab provinces.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What was the basis of Ottoman rule over the diverse Arabic-speaking provinces? How well did the Porte adapt to changing local conditions from the 16th through 18th centuries?
2. How did the Arab subjects view a Turkish caliph and sultan? What were the benefits of Ottoman rule? Was Ottoman rule ever onerous or intrusive before the reforms of the 19th century?

SUGGESTED READING

Hathaway and Barbir, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule*.

Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*.

Christians and Jews under the Porte

Christians and Jews living in the Ottoman Empire were given the status of *dhimmi* and were governed by well-established legal conventions. Known as “people of the book,” *dhimmi* were afforded certain protections, including the right to practice their religion, in exchange for their obedience to the Ottoman sultan.

CHRISTIAN POPULATIONS

- ◆ When the first Muslim armies invaded Byzantine Syria from 634 to 636, Arab commanders extended the status of *dhimmi* to the Christian populations who surrendered their cities. The *dhimmi* paid a head tax, *jizya* (Turkish *cizye*), as a mark of their inferior status and for the right to practice their faith. They were forbidden to learn the use of arms or to ride horses; they were also required to wear distinct clothing and to behave deferentially to Muslims of all social ranks.
- ◆ Christian religious services, especially under the Porte, retreated from the public space. Church bells were forbidden lest the ringing offend Muslims, and Christians were summoned to services by drums in Ottoman cities. In Constantinople, domed Byzantine churches were all converted into mosques by the early 16th century.
- ◆ Intermarriage between Muslims and Christians was only permitted upon conversion of the Christian to Islam, and Christian proselytizing

among Muslims carried the penalty of death. Although there were some notable instances of forced conversions to Islam—notably the Christian boys taken in the *devşirme*—the Ottoman sultans of the 15th and 16th centuries were exceptionally tolerant, especially in comparison to western Europe bitterly divided by the Reformation.

- ◆ Ottoman toleration was premised on the absolute supremacy of the *umma*. Christians and Jews were considered inferior, as they practiced faiths that were incomplete or erroneous due to ignorance of the Koran. Stereotypes and prejudices proliferated over time. When mixed with the belligerent nationalism of the 19th century, these ideas produced sometimes-tragic results.
- ◆ The Porte classified its dhimmi by religion. Each distinct faith constituted a millet, whose religious leaders represented their community before the sultan. Jewish communities, while a single millet under Ottoman law, maintained separate synagogues based on their spoken language and their country of origin until the mid-17th century, when synagogues were based on neighbors.
- ◆ Orthodox Christians were the largest Christian millet. The next Christian millet in importance was the Armenian Apostolic Church, of which the vast majority of Armenians were members. Catholic Christians were a smaller—but important—Christian millet.

JEWISH COMMUNITIES

- ◆ The diverse Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire from the late 15th century played an important role in the empire's economic and social life. Mehmet II, after his capture of Constantinople, constituted the Jews into a formal millet.
- ◆ Rabbi Moses Capsali, a respected Jewish scholar, won the friendship and respect of Mehmet, who made him the head of the empire's

Jewish community and honored him with second place at meetings of the sultan's divan.

- ◆ On March 31, 1492, Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II issued the Alhambra Decree, expelling from Spain Jews who refused to convert. At least 150,000 Jews were forced to relocate, and the majority fled to the Ottoman Empire, where they were welcomed by Sultan Bayezid II.
- ◆ Persecution brought successive waves of Jewish immigrants from Italy, the Rhineland, and Poland, but large-scale migration ceased after the



Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire were intellectually conservative in their interpretation of the Torah.

conclusion of the Thirty Years' War. These migrations established a number of Jewish communities in the capital and in Salonica, the capital of Macedonia, where Jews constituted the majority of the population by 1500.

- ◆ Because the Jewish religious hierarchy lacked the institutional organization of the Christian churches, rabbis and community leaders adroitly formed ties with Ottoman officials, placing their trust in personal rather than institutional ties.
- ◆ Wealthy Jews adopted much of the material life and aesthetics of the Ottoman elite classes, but they built modest homes and were careful not to project an ostentatious lifestyle. In Constantinople, Jews were active in music and the performing arts, and they set standards of taste in fashion, furniture, and decorative arts.
- ◆ Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire were intellectually conservative in their interpretation of the Torah, stressing the importance of tradition. Nevertheless, there was a remarkable exchange between wealthy Jews and their Ottoman counterparts.

ORTHODOX AND ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATES

- ◆ The Ottoman Empire's diverse Christian communities often competed with one another for economic advantages and ecclesiastical rights and privileges. Mehmet II centralized his control over his Christian subjects by empowering the Orthodox and Armenian patriarchates with the authority to discipline and speak for their communities.
- ◆ Mehmet II judged correctly that protection of the Orthodox hierarchy and its institutions would secure at least the passive loyalty of Orthodox Christians, who had long resented their Western coreligionists. In fact, the Ottoman conquest and rule over the Balkans was only possible because of this sound policy of co-opting the Orthodox clergy.

Christian wedding procession in the Ottoman Empire



- ◆ The Orthodox and the Armenian patriarchates both resided in neighborhoods where their parishioners were concentrated. They competed against one another to gain *firmas* from the sultan to confirm privileges, especially over access and control of the the holy places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.
- ◆ While conversion of Muslims was outlawed, the Porte had no objections to conversion from one Christian confession to another. Catholic missionaries scored some successes in Armenia, and the al-Jazirah won converts among Armenians and Syrian Christians.

Protestant missionaries, especially Presbyterians in Anatolia and Armenia, and Methodists in Syria also gained converts.

- ◆ Under the Porte, the main concern of the clergy of all the Eastern confessions was the spiritual welfare of their congregations. They stressed tradition, the dignity of the service, and continuity stretching back to the Roman Empire. The beautiful services of churches of the Eastern rite, with icons edified and inspired believers, largely explain why so many Christians adhered to their ancestral faith under Ottoman rule.
- ◆ The vast majority of Christians in the Ottoman Empire were peasants whose daily lives and conditions differed little from those of Muslim peasants. In the European provinces, the peasantry remained overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian, in part because the pig, native to the deciduous forests, was too important a source of protein and conversion to Islam would have required the elimination of the animal from the diet.
- ◆ Some Christian families became highly successful in the Ottoman Empire, in part because the Ottoman ruling classes were not supposed to engage directly in commerce. In addition, the Porte's shift to tax farming in the early 17th century allowed many dhimmi, Jews and Christians, to bid on the contracts and amass more capital for business ventures. Local Christians also acted as translators and financial agents for western European traders.
- ◆ Christians and Jews prospered under Ottoman rule because of the important economic and social roles they played within the empire and because of the Porte's own policy. However, their relationships with the Porte dramatically changed in the 19th century, when the millet system was challenged by European nationalism.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How generous were the policies of the Ottoman sultans toward their dhimmi, Jews and Christians? How did the dhimmi view the sultan-caliph?
2. What accounted for the success of the Jewish millet in the Ottoman Empire? How did Christian communities flourish under Ottoman rule?

SUGGESTED READING

Masters, "Christians in a Changing World."

Rozen, "The Ottoman Jews."

Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*.

Sunni Islam and Ottoman Civilization

In the late 15th and 16th centuries, Constantinople became the cultural center of the entire Islamic world. During this period, Ottoman poets, scholars, and artists drew from and expanded upon the cultural legacies of Abbasid Baghdad, Samanid Iran, and Sassanid Persia; perfected Turkish prose; and achieved impressive results in the fields of history, geography, mathematics, and astronomy.

LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS

- ◆ In 1453, Mehmet II lamented the absence of any learned members of the ulema or renowned madrassas, so he lured members of the ulema, poets, scholars, and artists to his court. Intellectual and cultural life in Anatolia had long centered at Konya—and from the early 14th century, at Karaman—but the eastern cities Sivas and Erzurum boasted important madrassas and lodges of Sufi mystical orders.
- ◆ In 1453, Cairo, Damascus, and the great caravan cities of Iran and Mawarannahr were the centers of Islamic learning and culture. The Ottoman sultans were great patrons of the arts, and they spent the profits of empire lavishing on cultural activities in Constantinople.
- ◆ Manisa and Amasya, residences of the imperial princes; Edirne, the second imperial capital; and provincial capitals in the Balkans such as Skopje (Turkish Üsküp) emerged as secondary centers of patronage.

Bayezid II, a thoughtful man inclined to learning, organized and catalogued more than 7,200 works in the imperial library at Topkapi.

- ◆ When Selim sacked the Seven Heavens Palace of Tabriz in 1514, he carried off not only manuscripts, but also scholars and miniaturist painters, who played a major step in creating literary and artistic schools in Constantinople. In 1517, Selim removed many manuscripts from the library at Cairo to Constantinople.
- ◆ The sultans between Mehmet II and Ahmet I were praised as the most generous of patrons, but they also composed poetry in the new, complex meters and excelled in other cultural pursuits. The sultans at Topkapi set standards for good taste in literary and visual arts of the Ottoman Empire, and they were emulated by members of the court, the officials of the Porte, and notables (ayans) of provincial cities.
- ◆ Every Ottoman governor was accompanied by a retinue that included poets, artists, and savants so that the imperial culture of the capital was transmitted to the major cities of the empire. By 1600, Constantinople was home to a distinct Ottoman civilization and on par with Mughal Delhi as the great cultural center of Sunni Islam. The Porte and the wider circle of professional Ottomans and Muslim provincial elites drew on Islamic traditions in their literary and visual arts.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH

- ◆ The Ottoman literate classes wrote in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and the writers of the late 15th and 16th centuries transformed Turkish into a new literary language. Reform of the Turkish language and alphabet greatly assisted in achieving impressive literacy rates, but it also distanced the modern Turkish population from its Ottoman literary legacy and the wider literary traditions of classical Islam.
- ◆ The first serious Turkish literature dates from the mid-14th century. The Turkmen who settled in Anatolia between the 11th and 13th

centuries brought a rich oral poetry, but little of it survives today. These were epic cycles reciting the deeds of ghazi, either engaged in jihad or blood feud.

- ◆ The Sufi orders of Dervishes likewise recited poems accompanied by music and dance to celebrate pious mentors. This poetry stressed deeds and miracles of holy ones, and the Porte was sometimes alarmed of the poets of Dervish orders suspected of subversive or heterodox beliefs.
- ◆ Scholars writing on religion, philosophy, mathematics, and science employed Arabic because these texts were aimed for a readership in the wider Islamic world. The evolution of literary Turkish empowered and civilized the Ottoman ruling classes at the same time, and it reflected the wider intellectual life of the Porte and primacy of the religious culture taught in the madrassas. The ulema of most Ottoman madrassas followed the liberal Hanafi school of Islamic thought, teaching mathematics, biology, and astronomy side by side with the Koran, the Hadith, and texts on *Şeriat*.

OTTOMAN CULTURAL LEGACY

- ◆ In many ways, the achievements in literature and thought represented a veritable Ottoman Renaissance between 1450 and 1600. The Ottoman ruling classes shared a delight in poetry, and for 150 years, poets created meters, genres, and a poetic language that produced masterpieces of Turkish poetry.
- ◆ When Sultan Suleiman communicated, he most often did so in verse, and poetry was the vehicle for expressing a wide range of emotions, intellectual concerns, the ties of client and servant, and private correspondence. Within the Ottoman literate society, lively debates ensued over the nature of poetry, its superiority over prose, and merits of different verse genres.



Whirling Dervishes performance

- ◆ Ottoman poetry shares meters, themes, imagery, vocabulary, and expressions with earlier and contemporary Persian and Arabic poetry, especially in panegyric and celebratory poems for high occasions at court.
- ◆ Between 1538 and 1609, six encyclopedias were produced of poets, with the canonical lists of the best and prefaces on the role of poetry. Poetry remained the medium of communication for the Ottoman elite classes down to the early 19th century.
- ◆ Ottoman poetry thus bound together the Ottoman ruling classes with a common set of assumptions, outlook, and language so that they were simultaneously members of an Islamic cultural world and learned class of *askeri*.

- ◆ Calligraphy and miniaturist painting to illustrate texts was another art form that was popular in the Ottoman Empire. This figural art was decorative and supplementary to the text on each page. The costly painting and gilt letters turned the text into a precious object.
- ◆ In the 16th century, Ottoman writers in Turkish established history as a serious intellectual discipline. In the composition of history and geography, Ottoman writers perfected the writing of narrative prose and created a distinct Ottoman historiography. The methods of analysis used by Ottoman historians were those of Ibn Khaldun, often regarded as the greatest Muslim historian of all time.
- ◆ Mustafa Ali, historian, poet, and bureaucrat of Bosnian origin, wrote a historical account of the successors of Suleiman the Magnificent, and he articulated a thesis of Ottoman decline. Later Ottoman historians of the 17th and 18th centuries repeated this complaint. These complaints were directed at the sultan in the hopes of reform and renewal. These later Ottoman historians did not see decline as inevitable or irreversible.
- ◆ Geography was a discipline subordinate to the writing of triumphant Ottoman history, and geographic knowledge was distilled into encyclopaedic form of what is useful to know. Travel writers who toured the Ottoman Empire, such as Evliya Çelebi, popularized their experiences of the wonders of the world, but they did not write analytical study.
- ◆ In the fields of astronomy, biology, and mathematics, the promising intellectual achievements of the 16th century were limited in scope and did not lead to a scientific revolution, in contrast to developments in western Europe. Biology was applied to medicine, and astronomy was important for measuring time for reckoning the seasons (and therefore tax collection) and the schedule of religious holidays and daily prayer.

Ottoman civilization must be given high marks for its achievements.

- ◆ For all of its brilliance within a great Islamic tradition, Ottoman civilization remained peculiarly disinterested in what happened outside of Islam. The empire's ambiguous relationship with the Christian West ultimately put it at a disadvantage in the 19th century.
- ◆ In the Balkans, the Ottoman cultural legacy is sometimes viewed as a culture of conquerors—the culture of a 400-year occupation. Arabs, meanwhile, prefer to extol the cultural achievements of the Abbasid caliphate. Ottoman civilization must be given high marks for its achievements, however, and serious scholarly study each year is restoring the place of the rich Ottoman cultural legacy.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What factors led to the flowering of literary and visual arts at Constantinople in the late 15th and 16th centuries? How important were the patronage of the sultan-caliph, the court, and the elite classes?
2. How was Ottoman civilization a renaissance of the early Islamic civilization? In what cultural pursuits did the Ottoman excel?

SUGGESTED READING

Hagen, "The Order of Knowledge."

Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Kuru, "The Literature of Rum."

Ottoman Constantinople

In 1453, Mehmet II rescued Constantinople from oblivion when he decided to make the ruined Byzantine city the new capital of the Ottoman Empire. Over the next 200 years, Ottoman sultans restored and transformed the city, turning it into Konstantiniyye, the cosmopolitan capital of Sunni Islam.

THE CITY OF CONSTANTINOPLE

- ◆ Sultans between the reigns of Mehmet II and Mehmet IV restored and transformed the ruined Byzantine city into a much greater Muslim city, Kostantiniyye, the capital of the Sublime Porte and long hailed as a paradise among Muslim cities.
- ◆ Between the mid-15th and mid-17th centuries, the population of Constantinople rose from 50,000 to 1.3 million residents. Ottoman Constantinople was a Muslim city, but it was much more cosmopolitan than the Byzantine city, with many communities of Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Armenian, and western European residents.
- ◆ The city's population, reckoned at 50,000 at the start of the siege in 1453, was likely halved after its capture and sack. Throughout his reign, Mehmet encouraged former residents who had fled the city to return, encouraged immigration—offering generous terms to skilled workers and craftsmen—and deported captive populations to the city.
- ◆ The population of the city of Constantinople, perhaps 25,000 at the time of the Ottoman capture, increased to 70,000 by the death of Mehmet II, 500,000 by the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, and

more than 1.3 million by 1600. The city's astonishing growth was sustained by the spectacular conquests of the 16th century and the Porte's securing of the trade routes of the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and eastern Mediterranean.

- ◆ Sultans from Mehmet II to Suleiman the Magnificent restored and transformed the city by building grand markets, mosque complexes, a naval arsenal and harbor, and palaces. The *bedestan*, a distinctly Turkish building based on Persian models, was a walled market found on the caravan routes that soon replaced the Byzantine forum of Constantine.
- ◆ The numerous neighborhood mosques also played a significant role in the recovery of the city. Constantinople's four districts were divided into neighborhoods, each one centered on and named after the neighborhood's major mosque. In each neighborhood, a kadi ruled on daily legal disputes, and the Janissaries policed.
- ◆ The personnel of Topkapı and the kapıkulu together were reckoned as numbering more than 80,000 in 1593, and they represented the largest single market in Constantinople. In the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, the sultan's servants represented 10 percent of the city's population and generated between one-quarter and one-third of the city's economic activities.
- ◆ The Janissaries policed neighborhoods, patronized guilds, and enforced regulations on taverns selling coffee, tobacco, and wine. The Ağa of the Janissaries also reviewed provisioning orders and sold protection to the guilds. As a result, the Janissaries came to dominate the capital's economic and social life.
- ◆ Orthodox Christians in the city worshiped in private in modest, enclosed churches. The cathedrals and churches built by the Byzantines were converted into mosques. Bells were forbidden, lest the ringing annoy true believers. Christian worship lost its public face.

- ◆ Ottoman Constantinople was defined by Topkapı, the seat of the sultan. It was the architectural expression of the supreme power of the Ottoman sultan as successor to Muhammad and leader of Sunni Islam. The political ideology behind Topkapı can be traced to the palaces of the Abbasid caliphate and the Sassanid Empire, which, in turn, were rooted in the earliest Near Eastern monarchies.
- ◆ Construction was begun by Mehmet II in 1459. As time went on, his successors spent less and less time outside the palace. Today, the complex is a mixture of styles. The palace's refurbished exteriors are from the early 19th century, but many of its buildings date back to the reigns of Mehmet II and Suleiman the Magnificent.
- ◆ Topkapı was an enclosed royal city of four courtyards. The first courtyard, Courtyard of the Janissaries, was a public area where the sultan or his grand vizier announced decrees and ordered executions of those officials fallen from favor. At the far end of the first courtyard was the Imperial Gate, erected in 1478 by Mehmet II.
- ◆ The second courtyard featured a wide lawn with gardens and fountains and was a parade ground for reviews and ceremonies. At the far end stood the Sublime Porte, which was built by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1524.
- ◆ At the far end of the third courtyard was the Gate of Felicity, which led to the Room of Petitions. The Room of Petitions, akin to a throne room, was where the sultan received envoys. It was also where each new sultan presented himself to the divan upon his predecessor's death. Behind the Gate of Felicity lay the fourth courtyard, which housed the private quarters of the sultan, the harem, and the palace's schools and libraries.



Hagia Sophia interior

IMPERIAL MOSQUES

- ◆ The great imperial mosques constructed between 1463 and 1665 expressed both the power of Sunni Islam and the Ottoman sultan. In Constantinople, Ottoman architects adapted and transformed the Muslim religious architecture to create the imperial mosques.
- ◆ With the conquest of Constantinople and the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, Ottoman architects could study the use of the pendentive dome, supported by descending sets of semidomes to enclose vast amounts of space. Ottoman architects perfected the use of the pendentive dome and strove to exceed Hagia Sophia. The results can be seen in the Suleimaniye and Sultan Ahmet Camii (Blue Mosque), the two greatest mosques in the city.
- ◆ The interiors of Ottoman mosques were decorated in a combination of fresco and ceramic tiles manufactured at Iznik. Ottoman artists



Blue Mosque

delighted in the use of titles with geometric designs to decorate the walls and domes of the imperial mosques. While such patterns often seem repetitive to Western observers, these patterns carry significance to Muslims.

- ◆ The imperial mosques of Constantinople were viewed as the model in the cities of the Ottoman Empire so that the skyline of many cities in the Middle East are Ottoman in inspiration and design. The Ottoman sultans rebuilt, expanded, and decorated the main mosques of the Holy Cities and the historic capitals of the caliphate Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad.
- ◆ In provincial cities, Ottoman governors likewise constructed more modest versions of the imperial domed mosque and therefore claimed a city's sacred space as Muslim. Lala Mustafa Paşa,

accomplished general of Suleiman the Magnificent and Selim II, built such a mosque in Erzurum in 1526, when he was governor.

- ◆ The most fitting example of exporting the imperial architecture to the provinces is the İshak Paşa Sarayı in Doğubayazıt, on the Ottoman-Iranian border, with an incomparable view of Mount Ararat. Two beys, İshak Paşa and Behlül Paşa, built the complex as a revival of classic Ottoman architecture, combining the architecture of Topkapı and the great mosques of Constantinople.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did sultans between Mehmet II and Suleiman the Magnificent restore the city of Constantinople? What were the crucial economic factors that ensured the revival of the city?
2. How did Topkapı and the great imperial mosques between 1463 and 1665 transform Constantinople into a capital worthy of the Porte?

SUGGESTED READING

Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*.

Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire*.

The Sultan at War: The Ottoman Army

The Ottoman sultans from Murat II to Mehmet IV possessed arguably one of the finest professional armies of Eurasia. In logistics, engineering, and fiscal administration, the Ottoman army excelled. Contrary to long-held opinions, the Ottoman army showed no significant decline in its professionalism and organization, so the defeats suffered at Vienna in 1683 and Zenta in 1697 were as surprising as much as they were decisive.

THE OTTOMAN ARMY

- ◆ Talented sultans between the reigns of Murat II and Mehmet IV commanded one of the finest armies of Eurasia. Sultans were long expected to command, and even in the 17th century such reclusive sultans such as Selim II and Murat III exercised sound judgment in their appointments of senior commanders, either viziers or *paşas*, for major expeditions.
- ◆ Many senior commanders hailed from Muslim military families in Bosnia and Albania. The Janissaries, spahi, and imperial artillery regiments served under professional officers who had gained promotion by merit and bravery and maintained morale and effectiveness.
- ◆ In contrast to contemporary European monarchs, the sultans long did not face an entrenched hereditary nobility who regarded command as their birthright, although the Janissaries evolved into a

military and bureaucratic caste by the early 17th century. Even so, the professional forces of the capital, numbering 100,000 by 1650, were *kapıkulu*, the slaves of the sultan.

- ◆ The sultans long cultivated the arts of war and generalship; hence, Suleiman the Magnificent kept a campaign diary of his wars and commissioned miniaturists to depict his battles and military life. The keen interest in generalship and warfare is reflected by how imperial chroniclers meticulously recorded campaigns, battles, and sieges.
- ◆ In the first 400 years of Ottoman history, 1300–1700, an Ottoman sultan was only defeated decisively twice in a great battle: Angora (on July 20, 1402) and Zenta (on September 11, 1697). In each case, the sultan had the ill fortune to fight against one of the great captains of history: Tamerlane and Prince Eugene of Savoy.
- ◆ In size and professionalism, the Ottoman imperial army matched the best of European armies: the Spanish army of the 16th century and the Swedish and French armies of the 17th century. Western sources exaggerated the size of Ottoman armies, particularly the household or professional field army in Constantinople, *kapıkulu*.
- ◆ The *kapıkulu* comprised men originally recruited under the *devşirme* who entered the elite infantry regiments, the Janissaries (*Yeniçeri*), the household cavalry (*kapıkulu spahi*), or the imperial artillery and engineering corps.
- ◆ Between 1527 and 1670, the numbers of the field army increased from 8,700 to 70,300; the Janissaries increased from 12,000 to 42,000 men on active service, but the household cavalry, which peaked at 21,000 in 1609, was reduced to 14,000 in 1670, probably as a measure to cut costs. The increasing numbers reflected the sultan's appreciation of the growing importance of firepower, both muskets and cannons.
- ◆ The timariot cavalry (*spahi*) in the 15th and 16th centuries was crucial for any major campaign against foreign foes or rebels, providing

by far the majority of the cavalry. Each timariot, with two to four retainers, reported to regional units at imperial assembly points on the main highways to the frontier.

- ◆ In the 16th and 17th centuries, timariots numbered between 90,000 and 106,000 men, but for most expeditions, only half this number was mobilized; for expeditions commanded by the sultan himself, as many as 73,000 timariots were summoned.
- ◆ The majority of timariots were concentrated in Rumelia and Anatolia, with smaller establishments in northern Syria and Diyarbekir. Timars were thus located for easy mobilization for offensive operations in central Europe or Iran and Iraq.
- ◆ The total men under arms in the Ottoman Empire is unknown, but the *kapikulu* and timariots in 1650 together totaled 175,000 out of a population of 18 million residents. The Ottoman professional army thus was comparable to the standing army of Louis XIV of France of 165,000.
- ◆ The Porte, however, faced two widely distant frontiers, so it could only deploy its field army to only a single frontier. Suleiman the Magnificent by adroit diplomacy could concentrate on a single foe, the Habsburg emperor or the Safavid shah, but his heirs faced the danger of a two-front war.
- ◆ During the three centuries of the so-called military revolution, Ottoman soldiers matched their European contemporaries in adopting handheld fire arms and infantry tactics. The Janissaries could execute difficult maneuvers in battle and excelled in the counterattack and storming fixed positions.
- ◆ The morale of the Janissaries was exceptional (even when mutinous), and they were motivated by their training, communal messes, devotion to the sultan and Islam, and incentives of promotion and rewards so

that they excelled in battle and set the standard for courage and duty to the diverse imperial army of the Porte.

- ◆ Cavalry remained the premier arm so that Ottoman field armies comprised two to three times the number of infantry and so that they resembled the armies of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. European authors repeatedly remarked on the agility and speed of Turkish cavalry and its skill in close-order fighting with scimitar or mace.
- ◆ The Ottoman army excelled in siege warfare, casting artillery comparable to the best European canons, and it was unmatched in mining operations. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman army improved siege artillery and perfected mining operations.
- ◆ When the imperial army was on the march, garrisons of border fortresses most often abandoned the fortress or surrendered on terms.
- ◆ As strategy shifted from conquest to defense in the latter 15th century, Ottoman engineers turned strategic cities, such as Belgrade or Van, into star fortresses, and they built networks of supporting forts. These fortresses controlled the nexus of highways and served as bases for offensive expeditions; the Porte never intended to defend its frontiers by a continuous line of fortifications.
- ◆ Such a defensive system would have been prohibitively costly, and the Porte was hard-pressed to improve the fortresses around Belgrade and Sarajevo after Hungary was surrendered under the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. Instead, defense of the frontier depended on the forces of *beylerbeyiler* and *beyler*, whose cavalry aggressively patrolled and raided.

- ◆ Emphasis was on the extension and improvements of the Roman highways across the Balkans and Anatolia, along with depots and bridges, to ensure strategic mobility. The Porte drew upon the manpower of bellicose populations on the frontiers and allies for both garrison service and offensive operations.
- ◆ Each beylerbey, a governor of a major province (*beylerbeylik* or *eyalet*), and district governor, or bey, of a sanjak maintained a household force and commanded local militia forces whose total numbers is unknown. These provincial and local forces guarded forts and depots and protected lines of supply and communication during major expeditions, thereby freeing the field army and timariots for offensive operations. In addition, Ottoman commanders made considerable use of allied units, especially of cavalry.

THE ROLE OF THE PORTE

- ◆ For 350 years, the Porte also excelled in logistics and responded to both rising military costs and inflation from the late 15th century with fiscal measures that ensured the mobilization and maintenance of its armies.
- ◆ Ottoman logistics were impressive given the distances and difficult terrains that field armies had to cross. The imperial army, whether commanded by the sultan or his deputy, serdar, commenced its march along the former Roman highways either to Hungary or Iran.
- ◆ The Ottoman army, in contrast to western European armies, had to march over thinly settled terrain—eastern Anatolia and the Balkans—so that any expedition against Tabriz or Vienna required meticulous planning. The distances and the arid conditions in eastern Anatolia forced Ottoman armies to wage operations over two campaigning seasons.



Encounter between Turkish troops and the troops of the Austrian emperor.

- ◆ In contrast to European armies during the Thirty Years' War, the Ottoman army did not put towns and cities under contribution to pay and supply its armies, but rather supplied from imperial depots and provisions purchased from contractors. The efficient provisioning system of the Ottoman army maintained discipline and reduced desertion. Ottoman logistics sustained large expedition armies without undue suffering by the provincial populations at least to the end of the 18th century.
- ◆ In paying for the rising cost of war in the 17th century, the Porte debased its silver currency (based on the akçe) and cut administrative costs by shifting from direct taxation to tax farming. To its credit, the Porte attempted to minimize the impact of war on the wider society.

At the same time, the Porte had to adjust its recruitment with the changing demography of the Ottoman Empire.

OTTOMAN DEFEAT

- ◆ It is still debated as to how and why the Ottoman army suffered such a decisive defeat at Vienna in 1683 that led to the defeat in the decline or sudden defeat in 1683 and the new war of the Holy League. In mobilization, logistics, and weaponry, the most recent studies conclude that the Ottoman army was not at a serious technological disadvantage in comparison to European armies of the late 17th century.
- ◆ The defeat, in part, might be explained by changing strategic and fiscal constraints once the era of conquest had passed by 1540. The heirs of Suleiman the Magnificent had to choose strategic priorities given the rising costs of war and the danger of a two-front war.
- ◆ The sultans after 1566 were committed foremost to ideological war against Safavid Iran so that major wars in Europe took second place, and the navy after the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 was neglected. The Porte lost sight of military developments in Europe during the Thirty Years' War.
- ◆ While European monarchs competed to recruit armies with evermore lethal firepower to gain an advantage over their neighbors, the Porte possessed a great empire and an imperial army with tried and tested methods and a remarkable record of success. The consequences were to be seen at the gates of Vienna in 1683 and on the battlefield of Zenta in 1697.

The Porte lost sight of military developments in Europe during the Thirty Years' War.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the advantages enjoyed by the Ottoman army from 1453 to 1683? How did it compare in generalship, weapons and tactics, and logistics to contemporary European armies?
2. How well did the Porte respond to new pressures—strategic, fiscal, and demographic—in maintaining its professional army during the 17th century? Was the Ottoman army ever in decline during this period?

SUGGESTED READING

Géza, "Ottoman Armies and Warfare."

Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*.

Sultan and Shah: Challenge of Safavid Iran

Ottoman sultans and Safavid shahs of Iran waged five major wars between 1514 and 1639 that transformed both rivals and defined the religious loyalties of Muslims of the Middle East today. At stake were the strategic lands of eastern Anatolia, Transcaucasia, and northwestern Iran as well as the leadership of the Islamic world.

OTTOMAN SULTAN VERSUS SAFAVID SHAH

- ◆ Mehmet II, by his victories over Uzun Hasan, ruler of the Ak Koyunlu, ultimately led to the emergence of a new, inveterate foe, Safavid Iran. Both the Ottoman sultan and Safavid shah clashed over historically strategic lands bounded on the north by the Caucasus and between the Taurus Mountains on the west and the Zagros Mountains to the east, stretching to the Persian Gulf.
- ◆ Armenia and Azerbaijan were the prime battlefields because of strategic east-west highways and, to the north, the Dariel and Derbent passes across the Caucasus to the Pontic-Caspian steppe of southern Russia. Once Russian armies gained control off these historic passes in the early 19th century, Anatolia and Iran were at the mercy of the tsar's army.
- ◆ The Ottoman sultan could never impose effective control over either pass, and as late as 1918, these passes and the Port of Baku were the

objectives of Baku and the objective for Halil Paşa, commander of the Ottoman army, and irregulars of the Army of Islam.

- ◆ The average elevation of the Armenian plateau is 3,000 feet above sea level, and the mountain chains rise to more than 5,000 feet. For any Ottoman army, the logistics were daunting; it was vital to secure local allies—Georgians, Circassians, or Kurds—to protect lines of communication with Constantinople.
- ◆ Ottoman sultans sought to control Shirvan and Dagista and therefore control the routes into northwestern Iran and the ports on the Caspian Sea. The Safavid shah wanted hegemony over the fierce Turkmen tribes on the Armenian plateau and the al-Jazirah. Hence, Safavid and Ottoman armies repeatedly clashed on battlefields between Van and Tabriz, and these wars have defined the modern boundaries today between Turkey and Iran and the geopolitics of the Middle East.

RELIGIOUS CLAIMS

- ◆ Safavid Iran, while the source of so many of the Islamic letters and arts that made Ottoman civilization, was the religious rival of the Porte, and this ideological contest has defined the loyalties of Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims in the Middle East today.
- ◆ In 1514, Selim I marched the first Ottoman army against the Safavid shah Ismail I in the name of Sunni Islam, and he had a fatwa issue turning his campaign into a holy war. War against fellow Muslims posed a serious theological issue, and it was resolved by declaring the Shi'ite Iranians heretics.
- ◆ In the aftermath of the collapse of the Timurid sultanate, the last incarnation of the Mongol empire, it might have been possible for reconciliation between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. The Ottoman-Safavid wars ended this possibility, and diplomatic exchanges between the two courts witnessed an escalation in bellicose and apocalyptic language.



Sultan Mehmet II
(1432–1481)

- ◆ Safavid shahs wanted their Shi'ism to be recognized as a fifth school within Islam, but the Ottoman sultan and his ulema objected to Safavid stress on Ali, fourth caliph, as a prophet almost on par with Muhammad and the condemnation of the first three Rashidun caliphs, Aisha (wife of Muhammad and daughter of Caliph Abu Bakr) and the Sahaba, who were the Prophet's trusted companions and whose testimony was vital in the composition of the Koran, Hadith, and Sira.
- ◆ Religious claims defined military objectives, for both Ottoman sultan and Safavid shah needed to control Baghdad, the historic capital of the Abbasid caliphs, and therefore the fount of legitimacy in Dar al-Islam.
- ◆ For the Safavids, the shrines at Najaf (the tomb of Ali) and Karbala (site of the historic battle in 680 where Umayyad forces defeated the sons of Ali, Husayn, and Al-Abbas) both hailed as imams and martyrs of Shi'ism.

- ◆ Shah Ismail united the Turkmen tribes of Azerbaijan, northwestern Iran, and eastern Anatolia into a religious confederation known as the Kızılbaş (“Red Turbans”).

TURKMEN TRIBES

- ◆ Uzun Hasan, sultan of the Ak Koyunlu, although expelled from Anatolia by Mehmet II in 1473, united the heterodox Turkmen tribes of Azerbaijan and the al-Jazirah and conquered Baghdad and Iran. The confederation of Ak Koyunlu lapsed in civil wars after the death of Uzun Hasan, and Shah Ismail reunited the Turkmen tribes. This new Safavid state was committed to Shi‘ism.
- ◆ Shah Ismail fielded more than 50,000 Turkmen cavalry, Kızılbaş propelled by Shi‘ite zeal. The shah aspired to recreate the empire of Tamerlane. The heterodox Turkmen tribes of central and eastern Anatolia inclined to accept Shah Ismail as their overlord, a Sufi mystic who composed ecstatic verse in Azeri Turkish.
- ◆ Selim I faced a much greater foe in Shah Ismail than his grandfather Mehmet II had faced in Sultan Uzun Hasan, because Shah Ismail claimed a universal lordship based on Shi‘ite mystical and apocalyptic visions.
- ◆ In the course of the fighting, the Safavid capital was moved from Tabriz to Qazvin in 1555 and then from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1598 so that the Safavid court was beyond the reach of the Ottoman army. This shift of the capital east transformed the Safavid state from a Turkmen tribal confederacy to a bureaucratic Shi‘ite, Iranian state by the reign of Abbas II.
- ◆ Shah Abbas II organized a bureaucracy staffed by Circassians, Georgian, and Tajiks, and he also added to the dynasty’s Shi‘ite beliefs the imperial ideology of the Sassanid shahs and Abbasid caliphs—the same ideology that was the basis of the legitimacy claimed by the Ottoman sultans.

OTTOMAN-SAFAVID WARS

- ◆ Between 1514 and 1722, the Ottoman sultans waged five major wars against Safavid Iran, and the wars became ever longer and costlier during the 17th century.
- ◆ Sultan Selim I declared war against charismatic Shi'ite shah Ismail I of Iran as the champion of Sunni Islam against heretics. Selim also transmitted to his heirs a strategy of overthrow whereby the Ottoman army forced the Safavid shah to accept decisive battle by threatening his capital of Tabriz. But after his humiliating defeat at Çaldıran on August 23, 1514, Shah Ismail and his successors avoided decisive battle and pursued a scorched-earth strategy.
- ◆ The later wars became ever longer, and indecisive. Tabriz was almost beyond the limits of Ottoman logistics, and the Safavid shahs twice relocated their capital, ultimately to Isfahan in 1598, beyond the reach of the Ottoman army.
- ◆ In 1534, Suleiman the Magnificent captured Baghdad, thereby committing his heirs to defend the historic seat of the Abbasid caliphate. Safavid shahs were just as determined to control Baghdad as well as the Shi'ite holy cities of southern Iraq, Najaf and Karbala.
- ◆ On May 29, 1555, by the Treaty of Amasya, Suleiman the Magnificent and Shah Tahmasp negotiated a sensible partition of the borderlands and the mutual recognition of each other's status.
- ◆ In 1578, Murat III declared in a strategic gamble to overthrow the Safavid state and therefore set off three more Ottoman-Safavid wars: from 1578 to 1590, from 1603 to 1618, and from 1623 to 1639.

Between 1514 and 1722, the Ottoman sultans waged five major wars against Safavid Iran.

- ◆ In 1638, Murat IV recaptured Baghdad and renewed the terms of the Treaty of Amasya, giving peace to the Middle East for the next two generations.

THE PORTE VERSUS SAFAVID IRAN

- ◆ The clash between the Porte and Safavid Iran was propelled by competing religious claims to leadership of the Islamic world.
- ◆ Sultan and shah long refused to accept a long-standing modus vivendi, and each concentrated on undermining the other when the opportunity arose. Control of Baghdad, and the shrines of lower Iraq, was essential for both rivals, so that for Ottoman sultans war with Safavid Iran took precedence over any war against the infidel Christian West.
- ◆ Suleiman the Magnificent personally commanded three expensive expeditions against Tabriz that failed to destroy Safavid power; in each case, Suleiman had to conclude less-than-satisfactory truces with the Habsburg foe Ferdinand.
- ◆ In terms of military technology and tactics, these wars tested both powers, and for the Ottomans, the Safavids were long the foes to beat, while the Habsburgs were a secondary threat until 1683.
- ◆ The Treaty of Amasya in 1555 was a judicious settlement, but Murat III overturned in a gamble to overthrow the Safavid state and therefore condemned the two powers to 50 years of further warfare. Murat IV recaptured Baghdad in 1638 and then wisely restored the terms of the Treaty of Amasya.
- ◆ The Treaty of Zuhab of 1639 gave the Middle East peace until 1722, but this outcome was a strategic draw and uneasy peace. This historic strategic rivalry still influences the geopolitics of Turkey, Iran, and the Arab nations today, dividing Shi'ites and Sunnis.

- ◆ Ottoman sultans had repeatedly refused to recognize Shi'ism as the fifth school of Islam and therefore perpetuated the ideological struggle. As a result, the Ottoman-Safavid wars redefined the Islamic world; henceforth Iran was the center of Shi'ite Islam, which gave cultural and, later, national coherence to the Iranians.
- ◆ The Ottoman sultan emphasized his role as caliph and head of Sunni Islam, which was even accepted by the Mughal emperors of India. This religious division still persists and defines loyalty in the Middle East. Even the political boundaries between Turkey and Iran, and Iraq and Iran, follow the frontiers determined by Ottoman-Safavid treaties between 1555 and 1639.
- ◆ The Ottoman resettlement of Kurds, Circassians, and Turkmen as military colonists transformed the historic lands of the Armenians into a patchwork of Muslim and Christian communities, with unforeseen and dire consequences in 1915. The Porte, in concentrating on the defeat of Safavid Iran, lost interest in developments in Europe during the Thirty Years' War, and this, too, would have unforeseen consequences.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How important were strategic concerns in the wars between Ottoman sultan and Safavid shah? What was the importance of religious ideology?
2. Why did the Ottoman-Safavid wars end in a strategic stalemate? Why did Ottoman sultan and Safavid shah persist in pursuing a decision on the battlefield? How costly were these wars, and how did they transform each state?

SUGGESTED READING

Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*.
Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*.

Sultan and Emperor: War in the West

At the Battle of Mohács in 1526, Suleiman the Magnificent conquered the Hungarian kingdom and advanced the Ottoman boundaries into central Europe. By his conquest of Hungary, Suleiman and his heirs henceforth faced a powerful Christian rival, the Holy Roman emperor Charles V. Twice, in 1529 and 1532, Suleiman failed to take Vienna and therefore break Habsburg power. The Porte, however, successfully defended against Habsburg efforts to reconquer Hungary. By the Peace of Zsitvatorok in 1606, Sultan Ahmet I and Holy Roman emperor Rudolf II agreed to a division of Hungary that assured the security of the Ottoman provinces in the Balkans for the next two generations.

BORDER CONTROL

- ◆ In the 15th and 16th centuries, Ottoman sultans were committed to defending a lengthy northern border in Europe shared with the Habsburg empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Russia, whose states were beyond the reach of the Ottoman army.
- ◆ Suleiman the Magnificent consolidated the Ottoman boundary in the Balkans when he captured Belgrade in 1521, and he and his successors secured the vital provinces south of the line of the Save and lower Danube Rivers.

- ◆ Whenever the sultan or grand vizier went on campaign, timariots were easily mobilized along the route of march at Edirne, Plovdiv, Sofia, Vidin, and Belgrade. In 1529 and 1683, heavy rains forced the abandonment of siege guns during the march, and the lack of heavy artillery accounts for the failure of the Ottoman army to capture Vienna on both occasions.
- ◆ Even so, the sultan or grand vizier could achieve the strategic aims of an expedition in one campaigning season and then retire to the capital. Suleiman only spent a single campaigning season, but after 1526, none ended in decisive victory.
- ◆ The Porte drew resources and manpower from the Balkan provinces and the vassal Christian principalities of Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia. Only during major imperial expeditions were the vassal princes summoned; in 1683, the cavalry of the Crimean Tatars and Imre Thököly of Transylvania were indispensable for the campaign of the grand vizier Kara Mustafa against Vienna.
- ◆ Furthermore, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia furnished grain, salted meat, woolens, and leather for the Ottoman army in the Balkans. The vassal princes also guarded the frontier running along the northern slopes of the Carpathians and the upper valleys of the Prut and Dniester Rivers to the southern Russian grasslands.

SULTAN VERSUS EMPEROR

- ◆ The Ottoman sultan and Habsburg Holy Roman emperor each claimed a universal lordship sanctioned by a religious ideology and each also claimed the Roman imperial legacy. On February 24, 1530, Charles V, grandson of the emperor Maximilian and King of Spain since 1516, was crowned Holy Roman emperor. The coronation ended a fierce competition for the imperial crown between Charles V and King Francis I of France.



Discovery of the body of King Louis II who died in the Battle of the Mohács

- ◆ Charles V, the greatest monarch in Europe since Charlemagne, could bring against Suleiman the Magnificent the wealth of the Spanish overseas empire, and the incomparable Spanish army, based on the *tercio*, dominated the battlefields of Italy and overthrew the Aztec and Inca empires. For the first time, an Ottoman sultan faced a truly imperial foe with the potential resources and ideology to match the Porte.
- ◆ By conquering the ancestral Hungarian foe, Suleiman had ensured a clash with the Habsburg empire, because Ferdinand I, Archduke of Austria, brother of Charles V, had the best claim to the thrones of Hungary and Bohemia after King Louis II had fallen at the Battle of the Mohács in 1526.

- ◆ This dynastic fact turned what should have been a distant frontier patrolled by Ottoman timariots of Bosnia and Hungarian vassals into a much greater conflict that often distracted Ottoman efforts away from Safavid Iran. Both Suleiman I and Charles V postured as the heir to the legacy of imperial Rome.
- ◆ The Habsburg emperors were the champions of the Counter-Reformation and the guardian of the Papacy so that they would work in tandem with His Holiness to launch Holy Leagues against the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Emperor and sultan were each pledged to prosecute religious war so that every treaty was a truce for a fixed period; it could be renewed, but none was a definite peace settlement. The sultan customarily issued a fatwa proclaiming jihad in wars against the infidel Christians and marched under the green flag of the Prophet.
- ◆ But sultans after Mehmet III's less-than-stellar performance at the Battle of Mező-Kersztes in 1596 no longer campaigned in the Balkans, and religious appeals played a much less role in the desultory border wars of the 17th century.
- ◆ Habsburg armies fought under the banners of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, but the soldiers, many of whom were professionals or mercenaries, served for different motives. Popes sought to revive the Crusading spirit by forming Holy Leagues against the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ In the case of the two greatest rivals, Suleiman the Magnificent and Charles V, each was much more zealous in battling the heretics of his faith: Safavid Iran or the Lutheran princes. Suleiman the Magnificent proved most adept in exploiting the European diplomatic scene, especially by his courting King Francis I of France into the "impious alliance."
- ◆ The forging of this French connection was long beneficial to the Porte, for it provided a counter to Habsburg ambitions in Italy, but

it led to long-term commercial and cultural links that enriched the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ The Porte had viewed from afar the wars between the French and Spanish monarchies over Italy since 1492, but Suleiman I sought a French alliance, the crescent to distract Charles V away from Hungary or the naval war in the Mediterranean.

This alliance climaxed in 1543, when a Franco-Ottoman fleet attacked Nice, and then Hayreddin Barbarossa wintered in the French port of Toulon and raided the Italian coasts in 1544.

Both Suleiman I and Charles V postured as the heir to the legacy of imperial Rome.

- ◆ Distance and divergent interests prevented later collaboration, but the Porte maintained cordial relations with the courts of Louis XIV and Louis XV that proved advantageous in dealing with Austria and Russia after 1699 so that it was a shock to Sultan Selim III when the French Directory ordered Napoleon Bonaparte to invade Egypt in 1798. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the Porte negotiated from a position of superiority rather than joined the Concert of Europe.

FIGHTING IN CENTRAL EUROPE

- ◆ Given the competing universal ideologies of the Ottoman sultan and Habsburg emperor, it is remarkable how the fighting in central Europe proved so indecisive after 1526. On August 29, 1526, Suleiman the Magnificent conquered the ancestral foe of Hungary by his greatest victory at Mohács. Suleiman's victory ended a struggle of more than 125 years between the Porte and Hungary for mastery of the Balkans.
- ◆ Suleiman occupied Buda without resistance on September 10, 1526, and he crowned as king of Hungary John Zápolya, prince of Transylvania who was to rule as an Ottoman vassal. The Ottoman

withdrew, and Suleiman returned to Constantinople after a campaign of nearly eight months.

- ◆ Suleiman had not reckoned on the dynastic claims of Archduke Ferdinand I of Austria, brother of the Habsburg king Charles I of Spain and future Holy Roman emperor Charles V. Ferdinand, married to Anna, sister of Louis II, insisted on his dynastic right to the thrones of Bohemia, Croatia, and Hungary. War between Ferdinand and John Zápolya ensued for the next 14 years.
- ◆ In 1540, John Zápolya died, leaving his infant son John II Sigismund. Suleiman had little choice but to annex Buda, install a garrison of Janissaries, and organize a sanjak defended largely by Bosnian timariots, while John Sigismund ruled as a titular king of Hungary in Transylvania.
- ◆ Ferdinand refused to renounce his claim to Hungary, so a war of sieges ensued for control of Buda. Three times, Suleiman launched major expeditions into Hungary: in 1543, 1552, and 1566. At his death, Suleiman had defeated every Habsburg effort to capture Buda, but then he could not break Habsburg power. In 1558, Ferdinand I succeeded as Holy Roman emperor.
- ◆ Clashes along the Croatian-Ottoman border led to the outbreak of the so-called Long Turkish War (from 1593 to 1606), and the costly, desultory struggle proved politically embarrassing for three sultans: Murat III, Mehmet III, and Ahmet I.
- ◆ On November 11, 1606, Ahmet I and Matthias, archduke of Austria (acting for his brother Rudolf II), concluded a 20-year peace at Zsitvatorok, which held to 1663. The Ottomans had won the war, and most of the peace, because from 1596 to 1605, they had brought

Clashes along the Croatian-Ottoman border led to the outbreak of the so-called Long Turkish War.

Transylvania and Wallachia under control and retaken the border fortresses, Eger, Esztergom, and Kanizsa.

- ◆ Prince George II Rákóczi, a most undutiful vassal, precipitated a crisis in Transylvania that compelled Grand Vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmet Paşa to invade Royal Hungary in 1663 because the emperor Leopold I had received Hungarian exiles. In 1664, Leopold I and Fazıl Ahmet Paşa agreed to a two-year truce, the Peace of Vasvár.
- ◆ Twice, from 1620 to 1621 and from 1668 to 1672, war erupted between the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but in each case the Porte intervened to secure the frontier of Moldavia and support the Crimean Tatars against attacks by the Cossacks.
- ◆ From 1672 to 1676, Grand Vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmet Paşa directed the conquest of Podolia, but John III Sobieski learned important lessons that he applied at Vienna in 1683. In 1683, Kara Mustafa Paşa broke the armistice of 1664 and led the last Ottoman offensive against Vienna, but he did not know how European warfare changed with the Thirty Years' War.

OTTOMAN RULE IN THE BALKANS

- ◆ The Porte came to accommodation with the Habsburg monarchy in central Europe after 1605, and in thereafter fighting was confined to local raiding along the frontier, and the Ottoman core provinces and vassal states of Transylvania, Wallachia, and Rumelia enjoyed peace and prosperity.
- ◆ Ottoman rule in the Balkans has been often considered as an oppressive and corrupt occupation, but this view is through the lens of Balkan nationalism of the 19th century. Ottoman tax registers reveal that population in the Balkan provinces recovered and increased significantly in the 17th century.

- ◆ Current scholarly studies indicate that the Balkan populations became disaffected only when the Porte had to wage disastrous wars against the Orthodox Russians from 1768 to 1774 and from 1787 to 1792.
- ◆ The clash between Ottoman sultan and Habsburg emperor also transformed the ethnic composition on both sides of the frontier from the mid-16th to the mid-18th centuries. These ethnic changes, resulting from the impact of war, transformed the ethnic communities of the Balkans just like similar migrations were transforming those of Armenia and eastern Anatolia. The consequences were only seen later in 19th century.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the aims of Suleiman the Magnificent in central Europe? Did he achieve his strategic goals? How formidable a foe was the Habsburg monarchy?
2. Did the expansion of the Ottoman Empire assure the security of the core Ottoman provinces in the Balkans? How successful was Ottoman rule in southeastern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries?

SUGGESTED READING

Brummett, "Ottoman Expansion in Europe."

Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*.

Sultan and Venice: War in the Mediterranean

With the conquest of Constantinople, sultans between Mehmet II and Selim II pursued a grand strategy of methodically securing the ports and naval stores of the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and eastern Mediterranean. The naval yards at Constantinople could match the finest galleys laid down by Venetian shipwrights. The naval contest climaxed at the Battle of Lepanto with the destruction of the Ottoman fleet. Yet the immediate result was a strategic draw in the Mediterranean between the Porte and the Habsburg monarchy. The arrival of the Portuguese with oceangoing warships in the Red Sea posed a new challenge to the Porte and marked a shift in the axis of naval power from the Mediterranean to the oceans of the world.

THE OTTOMAN IMPERIAL NAVY

- ◆ The Ottoman imperial navy, a remarkable achievement given absence of seafaring traditions among the Turks, long promised to deliver a decisive victory over the Habsburg rival in the 16th century.
- ◆ Mehmet II and Bayezid II created the navy to wrest from Venice the ports and islands of the Aegean world. Even though the Ottoman fleet lost 187 out of 251 ships engaged at Lepanto in 1571, the imperial arsenal launched a comparable fleet the next spring.

- ◆ The Porte pursued a consistent grand strategy to defend Constantinople and its vital sea-lanes to Egypt and the lands around the Black Sea from 1521 to 1571. Ottoman control of the Black Sea was unchallenged until the mid-18th century.
- ◆ Once Selim conquered Egypt and assumed the office of caliphate in 1517, grand strategy demanded that the Porte control the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean to protect the commercial lanes between Constantinople and Cairo and to protect Muslims on hajj from the piracy of the Knights Hospitallers on Rhodes.
- ◆ Between 1522 and 1571, Suleiman I and Selim II secured control of the eastern Mediterranean Sea for the next two centuries and ended the domination of the Italian maritime republics of Venice and Genoa.
- ◆ With Ottoman naval hegemony came peace and prosperity as shipping was profitable and predictable, so Constantinople, the Levantine ports, and Alexandria attracted evermore European merchants from the early 17th century.
- ◆ To achieve naval mastery, the Porte had to master sailing conditions and shipbuilding. Strategically, the sailing conditions in the Mediterranean favored the Christian power because of the seasonal pattern of winds and currents. It is astonishing how quickly the Ottomans mastered shipbuilding and naval warfare from the late 15th century given the complexity of constructing galleys and the high costs of maintaining fleets.

NAVAL COMMANDERS

- ◆ Ottoman success at sea in the 16th century was owed to the strategic vision of Suleiman the Magnificent and the daring and skill of his admirals, who repeatedly outfought their Christian foes. Suleiman the Magnificent was served by the finest naval commanders of the

16th century, and they prosecuted an aggressive war in the western Mediterranean to destroy Habsburg power.

- ◆ In 1522, the youthful Suleiman directed the siege of Rhodes to assert his legitimacy and to end the piratical activities of the Knights Hospitallers, who were outnumbered and eventually surrendered. The capture of Rhodes was a testimony to Ottoman skills in engineering and logistics, but the fleet had played an important role in blockading the harbor of Rhodes.
- ◆ In 1532, Suleiman summoned to Constantinople Hayreddin Barbarossa, the corsair and bey of Algiers who was the scourge of the Christians since 1517. Suleiman appointed him *Kapudan-i Derya*, admiral of the imperial navy, which henceforth operated in tandem with the fleets of the corsairs of the Maghreb against Habsburg Spain, Genoa, the Papacy, and Malta (where the Knights Hospitallers relocated in 1540).
- ◆ Suleiman boldly shifted his grand strategy after two abortive attempts to take Vienna, in 1529 and 1532, to an offensive at sea against Charles V. Hayreddin Barbarossa, commissioned to lead this war, was the most brilliant naval commander of the 16th century, with an uncanny sense for winds and currents and diving his opponents' intentions.
- ◆ For the next 14 years, Hayreddin Barbarossa dominated the waters of the western Mediterranean, strategically consistently surprising enemy fleets and unexpectedly pouncing on Christian merchant ships. Suleiman secured the services of other talented corsairs who gathered Turks, renegade Christians, and Moriscos expelled from Spain.



King Philip II of Spain
(1527-1598)

Titiane pinx.

Grotius Sculp. 1703.

- ◆ The emperor Charles V and his son King Philip II of Spain had the services of lesser naval commanders. Andrea Doria served as Habsburg admiral from 1535, when he commanded the fleet that captured Tunis. Devoted to the Genoese Republic and an implacable enemy of King Francis I of France, Andrea Doria repeatedly clashed with his Venetian allies.
- ◆ The court of Madrid often regarded the war in the Mediterranean as a secondary priority. Much more important were the conquest of the New World and, after 1559, the clash with the privateers of Queen Elizabeth I for mastery of the North Atlantic.
- ◆ Philip II obsessively managed his empire, repeatedly delayed and countermanded orders, and brooded over any setback. Invariably, the Spanish fleet sailed late, missed strategic opportunities, and failed to coordinate with Venice, the Papacy, and the Knights Hospitallers.
- ◆ Venice, often called the hinge of Europe, held a deciding position in any naval war of the 16th century. The signoria pragmatically balanced the political and commercial interests of the Republic of Saint Mark and distrusted alliances with the Habsburg monarchy, the rival republic Genoa, or the Papacy.
- ◆ The Venetian Senate, served by expert diplomats and spies, was kept apprised of the Porte's policies and preferred to negotiate rather than risk costly wars. Since 1453, Venice had lost steadily many of her colonial possessions to the Ottoman navy. The state arsenal at Venice constructed the finest galleys rowed by citizens and hired professionals, and this arsenal devised the six galleasses, floating gun platforms, that won the Battle of Lepanto.
- ◆ Venice lacked the resources to fight a lengthy war alone against the Porte, but she possessed the finest galleys and seamen and therefore was the key to any successful Christian coalition. The skill of the Venetian fleet was matched by the small squadron of the Knights

Hospitallers, who combined Crusading zeal with naval technology to wage a relentless war of piracy against Muslim commerce.

THE DEFEAT OF THE OTTOMAN FLEET

- ◆ In 1537, Suleiman the Magnificent opened his strategic naval offensive in the West by declaring war on Venice, and this third Ottoman-Venetian war ignited continuous naval actions down to the siege of Malta in 1565. Suleiman aimed to clear the Aegean waters of Venetian possession so that the imperial fleet could sail unmolested to the support of the corsair beys of Algiers and Tripoli.
- ◆ In 1537, Hayreddin Barbarossa captured the Venetian islands in the Aegean and laid siege to Corfu, the gateway to the Adriatic Sea, so the alarmed signoria of Venice desperately appealed to Pope Paul III. Under Papal auspices, Charles V, Genoa, Venice, and the Knights Hospitallers formed a Holy League against Suleiman.
- ◆ Off the coast of northwestern Greece at Preveza on September 28, 1538, Hayreddin Barbarossa, commanding 122 galleys and galliots, defeated the league fleet under Andrea Doria, with more than 300 ships, including 112 galleys. Suffering no losses in ships, Hayreddin Barbarossa destroyed 25 ships and captured 36 prizes and 3,000 prisoners.
- ◆ Hayreddin Barbarossa adopted a crescent formation while Andrea Doria lost control over his allied squadrons and withdrew hastily from the battle, to the dismay of the Venetians. The Venetians kept good order, and their flagship, *Galeone di Venezia*, under Alessandro Condalmiero, inflicted heavy damage on Ottoman ships from its heavy guns.
- ◆ The Battle of Preveza delivered the initiative at sea to the Porte for the next 33 years, for the Ottoman fleet and its corsair allies raided

at will across the western Mediterranean. By 1571, the Ottoman fleet ceased to exist after the Battle of Lepanto.

- ◆ Such an overwhelming victory at Lepanto had, in the immediate aftermath, little impact, and within a year the Porte had replaced the lost fleet and held the island of Cyprus so that in 1573 Venice negotiated a treaty recognizing her territorial losses and paying an indemnity.
- ◆ After 1571, given the costs of naval warfare in the Mediterranean, the Porte shifted its priority to Safavid Iran, and the Ottoman offensive in the western Mediterranean ended in a strategic stalemate. The Ottoman sultan and Habsburg king of Spain agreed to a partition of the Mediterranean and to turn to other priorities.

Battle of Lepanto



The Battle of Lepanto was the climax not only of galley warfare, but also of the struggle to control the middle sea.

- ◆ Already, the Ottoman navy encountered a new threat in the Red Sea from Portuguese oceangoing ships of the line, propelled by wind and mounted with artillery. The Ottoman fleet could defend the ports of the Red Sea, and therefore the Holy Cities, but their galley fleets met with disaster when they ventured into the Indian Ocean in 1535 and 1547. Naval power no longer centered on the Mediterranean, but on the world's oceans, and the axis had shifted the maritime powers of northwestern Europe.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How remarkable was the Ottoman naval achievement in the 15th century? How much was owed to the genius of Suleiman the Magnificent and his admirals? Why did the naval successes fail to gain the Porte overseas conquests?
2. Did the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 mark the climax of naval warfare in the Mediterranean world? Did the Ottoman navy decline after 1571? What were the strategic and economic conditions in the Mediterranean Sea in the 17th century?

SUGGESTED READING

Crowley, *Empires of the Sea*.

Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War*.

Köprülü Viziers and Imperial Revival

Although Murat IV was not followed by other able sultans, in 1656, the Albanian Mehmet Köprülü took power as grand vizier and founded a dynasty of loyal, professional servants who monopolized the office of grand vizier and reformed the state. The family of Köprülü viziers knew how to negotiate with the power brokers in the provinces, maneuver among the factions in the capital, and retain the confidence of the sultans, suspicious and alert to their own safety. Hence, they effectively administered the capital and empire despite the weak character of a sultan ruined by his upbringing in Topkapı.

THE FAMILY OF KÖPRÜLÜ VIZIERS

- ◆ In September 1656, Sultan Mehmet IV and the Turhan Hatice Sultan named as grand vizier Mehmet Köprülü to end the ruinous war against Venice, but the energetic vizier instead reformed the administration and ended political instability within the House of Osman.
- ◆ Mehmet Köprülü typified the new Muslim elite that emerged in the 17th century with the end of the *devşirme*. He seemed a most unlikely candidate to reform the Porte, given his advanced age and relatively undistinguished career.
- ◆ But he had experience, and he was most adept in using the influence of powerful patrons to advance in rank. He had enjoyed

the patronage of four grand viziers—notably, Hüsrev Paşa and Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Paşa. In the service of so many grand viziers, Mehmet Köprülü witnessed the rapid turnover of sultans and the deadly intrigue in the harem.

- ◆ Mehmet Köprülü, committed to the sultan and institutional Ottoman Islam, shared his class's moral view of history, which is well expressed by the later historian Mustafa Naima, who drew on the analysis of Ibn Khaldun.
- ◆ The cyclical rise and fall of dynasties was compared on medical analogies, so dynastic health could be restored by a moral treatment. Furthermore, Mehmet Köprülü saw the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent as standard of justice, so he premised his reforms on a simple return to the morality and institutions of Suleiman I.
- ◆ Mehmet established a dynasty of grand viziers and bureaucrats who rescued the empire from factions and court intrigue, precipitated, and then took the empire through the crisis of 1683 to 1699: the Great Turkish War. After 1711, the family lost prominence but had done its work well.
- ◆ Between 1656 and 1711, the family counted seven grand viziers who collectively held the office for 45 years out of a total of 55 years. All the Köprülü viziers were accomplished and had an impeccable reputation of honesty that sprang from their Muslim piety. They set a moral standard of excellence that was seldom achieved.
- ◆ Fazıl Ahmet, son of Mehmet Köprülü, was the second member of the family to serve as grand vizier for Mehmet IV and continued the reforms of his father. Next, two sons-in-law of Mehmet followed: Kara Mustafa and Abaza Siyavuş Paşa. The fifth was Mehmet's younger son, Fazıl Mustafa

The octogenarian Grand Vizier Mehmet Köprülü in just six years conducted an impressive number of reforms.

Köprülü. Then followed two nephews of Köprülü Mehmet: Amcazade Köprülü Hüseyin Paşa and Köprülü Numan Paşa. The members of this Albanian dynasty grew up knowing the founder, Köprülü Mehmet, and inculcated with his values and commitment to reform of the Porte.

- ◆ The octogenarian Grand Vizier Mehmet Köprülü in just six years conducted an impressive number of reforms, cracked down on corruption, and restored Ottoman prestige among rivals and vassal states. Mehmet Köprülü saw moral reform as inextricably bound up with *Şeriat* and the prosperity of the *umma* under the Ottoman sultan.

MEHMET AND FAZIL AHMET KÖPRÜLÜ

- ◆ Mehmet Köprülü and his son Fazil Ahmet restored Ottoman prestige on the frontiers and countered aggression from more powerful Austria, Poland-Lithuania, and Persia. Mehmet Köprülü was appointed foremost to end the desultory war in Crete, from 1654 to 1669, and the Venetian blockade of the Dardanelles. With undisputed supreme power, the father and son ended the Venetian war after 13 years, although they could do little from 1658 to 1664 due to events in Transylvania.
- ◆ Victory came at a high price for both belligerents; the signoria estimated that the war had cost well more than 4.25 million gold ducats on the defense of Candia alone. The Porte had poured even more money, men, and materiel to conquer a ruined island, while the Venetians had retaken many of the strategic fortresses in Dalmatia. The crisis in the capital, however, had passed in 1657.
- ◆ From 1657 to 1664, Mehmet and Fazil Ahmet Köprülü dealt with the threats to Ottoman hegemony in Transylvania due to the actions of the undutiful voivode George II Rákóczy, who aspired to the election of the Polish crown, and from 1657 to 1658, in alliance with King Charles X of Sweden, invaded Poland without the permission of the Porte.

- ◆ George Rákóczi's action risked precipitating a major war between the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Mehmet Köprülü called for the removal of George Rákóczi, and the Transylvanian Diet deposed him, but George Rákóczi refused to abdicate.
- ◆ In 1659, Mehmet Köprülü at the head of the first Ottoman expedition in Europe in 40 years, invaded Transylvania and drove out George Rákóczi and imposed a compliant Ákos Barcsay as prince of Transylvania. In 1660, Mehmet Köprülü dispatched another Ottoman army when George Rákóczi attempted to regain his throne, and he fell fighting. Tatar cavalry on both occasions devastated Transylvania.
- ◆ The Transylvanian Diet elected John Kemény as the new prince, and he repudiated Ottoman overlordship and appealed to the Habsburg Holy Roman emperor Leopold I. Border clashes ensued, and in 1663, the new grand vizier, Fazıl Ahmet Paşa, invaded Royal Hungary in 1663 because the emperor Leopold I had received Hungarian exiles.
- ◆ At the Battle of Saint Gotthard in 1664, Raimondo, count of Montecuccoli, won a stunning victory over the Ottoman field army, but he failed to follow up his success. Leopold I and Fazıl Ahmet Paşa thus agreed to a 20-year truce, the Peace of Vasvár.
- ◆ On four occasions, from 1659 to 1664, a Köprülü grand vizier had to lead or order a major Ottoman expedition in Hungary, but the demonstration in force had secured the imperial frontiers of Suleiman I. Köprülü grand viziers also responded to the growing disorder within Poland-Lithuania to defend the northern frontier of Moldavia and to protect the Crimean Tatars, who repeatedly clashed with the Ukrainian Cossacks.
- ◆ Along the entire northern frontier in Europe, from 1658 to 1676, the Köprülü grand vizier Fazıl had defeated foes and extended the frontier. By the efforts of Mehmet and Fazıl Ahmet, Mehmet IV

ruled over an empire that even extended the limits of the empire of Suleiman the Magnificent.

KARA MUSTAFA

- ◆ Kara Mustafa, the third Köprülü grand vizier, blundered by attacking Vienna in 1683, because the ensuing Great Turkish War, from 1683 to 1699, ended in a crushing defeat that halted reform and nearly destroyed the Köprülü family. Yet new Köprülü grand viziers guided the empire through the crisis and set the stage for another recovery under Ahmet III.
- ◆ Köprülü Kara Mustafa, who has been blamed for the Ottoman defeats, had good cause to renew hostilities against the Habsburg Holy Roman emperor in 1683. Truces between Ottoman sultan and Habsburg sultan never inhibited the raiding across the frontier by marcher lords of both empires.
- ◆ In 1673, the Holy Roman emperor suspended the constitution in Royal Hungary and issued repressive measures against Protestant Hungarians. In 1678, Protestants rebelled in Hungary under Imre Thököly, who was proclaimed king of an independent Hungary.
- ◆ In 1682, Thököly Imre appealed to Sultan Mehmet IV and offered homage to the Porte in return for military assistance. The opportunity appeared to be a unique chance to avenge setbacks at Vienna in 1529 and 1532.
- ◆ Even though the terms of the Peace of Vasvár were still in effect, Kara Mustafa persuaded Sultan Mehmet IV to declare war on Vienna on August 6, 1682. He aspired, just like his father-

*Kara Mustafa, the third
Köprülü grand vizier,
blundered by attacking
Vienna in 1683.*

in-law and brother-in-law, to extend once more the limits of the empire of Suleiman the Magnificent.

- ◆ In contrast to 1529, when Suleiman I withdrew in good order, the Ottoman army had been effectively destroyed in 1683. At Belgrade on December 25, 1683, Kara Mustafa was strangled on orders of Mehmet IV, but his mistakes in the final battle at Vienna were not the only reasons for the catastrophic Ottoman defeat. The absence of siege guns was an important factor, but mining operations also had been countered, and the Ottoman army was suffering from hunger and disease.
- ◆ Kara Mustafa and the Ottoman askeri had not heeded the lessons of the Thirty Years' War, and the defeat at Vienna shattered the Christian image of the invincible Turk. The ensuing Great Turkish War witnessed the defeat of three major field Ottoman armies, and in the last battle at Zenta in 1697, Sultan Mustafa II commanded—the first sultan to be defeated in a battle since Bayezid the Thunderbolt.
- ◆ The Ottoman army was overwhelmed by the disciplined armies of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland-Lithuania, and Russia. At the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, a treaty framed along the new principles of the Treaty of Westphalia from the Thirty Years' War, Sultan Mustafa II acknowledged not only defeat, but the major territorial losses, for the first time, to Christian powers. The Köprülü revival abruptly had come to an end, and the Ottoman Empire was not only on the defensive—it was on the retreat.

The Ottoman army was overwhelmed by the disciplined armies of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland-Lithuania, and Russia.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did Köprülü Mehmet and Fazıl Ahmet Paşa represent the best of the Ottoman ruling class? What were their motives and aims in pursuing reform? How well did they succeed?
2. What accounted for the defeats at Vienna in 1683 and in the Great Turkish War? Why were they so unexpected?

SUGGESTED READING

Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and the Islamic Tradition*.

Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna*.

The Empire at Bay, 1699–1798

The catastrophic defeats in 1683 to 1699 and the Treaty of Karlowitz ended the Köprülü revival and revealed severe deficiencies with the Ottoman government and military. For the first time, the sultan, Mustafa II, relinquished major territories to Christian powers under the rules of European diplomacy framed at the Treaty of Westphalia. Mustafa II and Ahmet III each strove to reassert his personal rule and to reform the army. The Porte also suffered repeated fiscal crises in war, debased its currency, and lost control over taxation. Steadily, Ottoman field armies lost discipline, tactical and technological advantages, and sound logistics. In two disastrous wars waged against Tsarina Catherine the Great, the Ottoman army and its logistics all but collapsed.

THE TREATY OF KARLOWITZ

- ◆ The Treaty of Karlowitz of 1699 is rightly seen as marking a turning point in Ottoman history, because henceforth the sultan could no longer reign with the conceit of supremacy over the infidel Christian West. Ottoman defeat ended the Christian Europe's dread of the invincible armies of the Grand Turk, but it also stirred the Ottoman ruling classes to seek reasons for the sudden and unexpected military defeat.
- ◆ The Treaty of Karlowitz confirmed the first major territorial loss suffered by the Sublime Porte, so it is often considered a turning point that marked the steady decline of the Ottoman Empire into the

"sick man of Europe," a phrase coined from a remark made by Tsar Nicholas I in 1853.

- ◆ In 1699, the Ottomans were forced to negotiate according to the rules of European diplomacy that emerged at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Henceforth, the Porte negotiated rather than dictated terms.
- ◆ In 1699, the Porte still held the strategic line of the lower Save and lower Danube, the shield of Rumelia, and vassal Rumanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. The Porte was at a disadvantage, but recovery was possible.

REFORM

- ◆ The catastrophic defeats in 1683 to 1699 impressed upon the sultan and the Porte the urgency of reform, but no sultan or grand vizier attempted the sweeping reforms later envisioned for two reasons: the reluctance to overturn tradition and deeper weaknesses.
- ◆ The Ottoman Empire was suffering deeper institutional, economic, and social weakness that ultimately prevented successful political and military reform. In the 18th century, the Porte faced mounting costs and shrinking territory so that each war invariably produced a fiscal crisis. Repeated currency reforms failed, and foreign coin circulated as the trade coin in the Ottoman Empire from 1740 on.
- ◆ Within the empire, two developments of the early 17th century unintentionally compromised the Porte. In shifting to tax farming in the provinces, the Porte empowered local elites, collectively called *ayans*, who amassed patronage in the provinces. Leading *ayans* doubled as Ottoman officials and therefore spared the Porte of costs of direct administration in an inflationary era.
- ◆ At a time when European monarchs were centralizing government, the Porte turned so many of the daily affairs in provinces to local

notables. Many *ayans* maintained household soldiers. After the serious losses in 1683 to 1699, the Porte turned these irregular units into soldiers of the sultan whenever major war erupted, and this expedient characterized Ottoman armies to the end of the empire.

- ◆ At the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768 to 1774, the Porte could deploy in Europe 60,000 Janissaries, 40,000 Crimean Tatars, and 100,000 to 150,000 irregulars and militia against a Russian professional army of 350,000. Furthermore, the *ayans* collected extraordinary war taxes and supplies; in both wars against Catherine the Great, Ottoman logistics collapsed.
- ◆ Finally, even after the dynasty of Köprülü grand viziers ended in 1710, sultans bent on reform still faced the Köprülü ethos and establishment. In 1700, the leading Ottoman families who staffed the upper echelons of the Porte's administration were products of the Köprülü grand viziers.
- ◆ They, along with the ulema and the Janissaries, shared an ethos to uphold traditional order based on *Şeriat*. Hence, the ruling classes at all levels of Ottoman society fundamentally opposed technological innovation (and with it in time, modernity) of the infidel West.
- ◆ The sultans Mustafa II and Ahmet III aimed to assert their personal role and to reform administration and army to confront the West. The reform succeeded in part; the sultans of the early 18th century asserted their personal power and fielded armies that won victories.
- ◆ Yet neither the sultans nor anyone in the Ottoman ruling classes could contemplate sweeping reforms comparable to those of Peter the Great. If they had, then the history of the Ottoman Empire might have turned out quite differently.



Peter the Great
(1672–1725)

TROUBLE WITH RUSSIA

- ◆ During the first half of the 17th century, the Porte, due to reforms of Sultan Ahmet III and Mahmud I, scored several significant victories over the traditional foes of Venice, the Habsburgs, but the Ottoman military collapsed in the face a new foe, the tsarina Catherine the Great. Sultans, grand viziers, and the professional Ottoman elite in Constantinople agreed on the reversal of the humiliating Treaty of Karlowitz.

- ◆ In the generation after the Treaty of Karlowitz, the Porte and the Ottoman army had shown resilience and restored defensible frontiers in Europe so that the provinces of Rumelia enjoyed 40 years of peace and prosperity. This peace, however, rested on the fact that after 1740, both Austria and Russia turned their attention to western Europe: the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War.
- ◆ The sudden collapse of the Safavid state threatened to undermine the frontiers fixed by Sultan Murat IV in 1639, but the Porte managed to check the ambitious Nader Shah without resorting to major military expeditions.
- ◆ Sultan Ahmet III exploited the disorder in Iran following the downfall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722 by annexing Azerbaijan, Kermanshah, and eastern Georgia and Armenia. Ahmet gained the caravan cities Tabriz and Hamadan, the port Baku on the Caspian Sea, and the strategic Derbent Pass—and therefore control over the lands of the Caucasus.
- ◆ Ashraf Hotaki, the victor in the Iranian civil war, contested Ottoman control of these borderlands. Despite a victory over an Ottoman army at Khoramabad in 1726, Ashraf Hotaki recognized Ottoman annexation of the disputed lands by the Treaty of Hamadan in 1727. The unfavorable treaty discredited Ashraf Hotaki, who was overthrown by Nader Shah.
- ◆ Twice, Nader Shah waged wars against the Porte over the frontier lands of the Caucasus; he repeatedly threatened Baghdad to compel the Porte to negotiate over the frontier lands. The Porte was never forced to wage a major campaign in Iran, because Nader Shah targeted the Uzbeks and Mughal India as his prime foes.
- ◆ Twice, in 1736 and 1746, Sultan Mahmud I and Nader Shah negotiated treaties that restored the boundaries of the Treaty of Zuhab of 1639. Furthermore, Sultan Mahmud I refused, on both occasions, to recognize Iranian Shi'ism as the fifth school of Sunni Islam, so



Catherine the Great, tsarina of Russia
(1729–1796)

two decades of inconclusive fighting ended in a stalemate and the persistence of sectarian divisions within the Islamic world.

- ◆ Catherine the Great, tsarina of Russia, determined the fate of the Ottoman Empire, as for the first time the Porte had to defend its very

existence against a Christian power. The defeats at the hands of the Russian armies in 1768 to 1774 and 1787 to 1792 proved even more unexpected and catastrophic for the Ottoman Empire than those suffered in 1683 to 1699.

- ◆ The first Russo-Turkish War was a turning point for Catherine the Great, because she realized the strategy of Peter the Great, securing permanent ports on the Black Sea and ending Ottoman naval supremacy. War erupted in 1768 because the Ottoman Empire was swept up in the rivalry of the European powers over the fate of Poland. Yet Sultan Mustafa III was hardly duped into war with Russia in the interests of France, which opposed the partition of Poland.
- ◆ Mustafa III, while he had sound reasons to go to war in 1768, fielded an army totally outclassed by a professional Russian army and schooled in the lessons of the Seven Years' War. The Ottoman logistical system collapsed, and in the next year, the Russians besieged the great fortresses defending the delta of the Danube River and therefore the entrance into the Ottoman Balkans.
- ◆ The war at sea dramatically determined the outcome of war. From 1770 to 1774, the Russian army occupied the Rumanian Principalities while the Russian navy ranged at will in the Aegean Sea.
- ◆ Catherine the Great concocted the Greek Plan of placing her grandson Constantine on the throne of a restored Byzantine Empire in Constantinople.
- ◆ In 1772, Austria diplomatically intervened to limit the Russian victory, and negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. Russia agreed to withdraw from the Rumanian Principalities and the Aegean Sea, but the Crimean Khanate and Kabardia (north of the Caucasus) were declared free under Russian protection.
- ◆ The Porte also conceded that the Russian monarch was the protector of the Orthodox millet within the Ottoman Empire and guardian

of Christian Holy Places—a provision that invited future Russian interference.

- ◆ The treaty, secured by the offices of Austria, broke the Ottoman control of the northern shores of the Black Sea, and in 1783, Catherine annexed Crimea and Kabardia.
- ◆ Foremost, the Porte had surrendered its sovereignty over the Orthodox millet, who formed the majority of the population in the Balkans, and gave the legal right to Russia to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The terms of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca almost assured another war between the Ottoman and Russian Empires.
- ◆ The annexation of Crimea inflamed the Ottoman political classes, but in 1786, Catherine the Great toured the settlement of "New Russia" in the former Tatar Khanate. Russian colonization of New Russia posed a mortal threat to the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ In 1787, Sultan Abdül Hamid I declared war, with the aim of reversing the decision of the previous war. From 1787 to 1788, the Russian army overran and occupied Moldavia and Wallachia once again. The strategic Ottoman fortress at the mouth of the Dnepr, in Ochakov, fell on December 6, 1788, after six months of massive Russian bombardment.
- ◆ The Ottoman position was strategically hopeless on April 7, 1789, when Sultan Abdül Hamid died. The new, clear-headed sultan Selim III had little choice but to open negotiations that produced the Treaty of Jassy in 1792. Selim III recognized Russian annexation of the Crimean Khanate, the Ottoman lands between the Bug and the Dniester, and

In 1772, Austria diplomatically intervened to limit the Russian victory, and negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774.

the fortress of Ochakov, while Austria secured Bukovina (detached from Moldavia).

- ◆ Selim III saw the need for major reform of the Ottoman army and state. He had also gained better terms than expected because both the new Austrian emperor Leopold II and Catherine the Great turned west to confront a much greater threat of revolutionary France. Selim could not anticipate that the next crisis would come from the west, when the army of the French Republic under Napoleon Bonaparte landed at Alexandria, in Egypt, on July 1, 1798.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the crucial weaknesses of Ottoman state and society that prevented more comprehensive reform in the 18th century? How successful were reforms issued by Ahmet III and Mustafa III?
2. What accounts for the collapse of the Ottoman army in the Russo-Turkish War?

SUGGESTED READING

Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*.

Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*.

Napoleon Invades Ottoman Egypt

On July 1, 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte and an army of the French Republic landed in Alexandria to overthrow the oppressive Mamluks and bring the benefits of the revolution to the Egyptians. Sultan Selim III declared war, allied with Great Britain, and readied Ottoman armies to expel the invaders from Dar al-Islam. The brief French occupation of Egypt proved a turning point. Napoleon's invasion also compromised Selim III, who had just attempted to modernize the Ottoman army and administration. Selim's unpopular reforms and defeats at the hands of Napoleon, and then the armies of Tsar Alexander I, led to his overthrow by Janissaries and ulema in Constantinople and the end of reform.

THE FRENCH INVASION OF EGYPT

- ◆ Although Napoleon Bonaparte and the French army invaded and occupied Egypt for about three years, from 1798 to 1801, this invasion wrought profound, long-term consequences for the Ottoman Empire that reverberate in the Middle East today.
- ◆ The sultan Selim III was bewildered and shocked when the French army landed in Alexandria on July 1, 1798. Selim III viewed with dismay what little news he had about the French Revolution, and the execution of Louis XVI in the name of liberty on January 21, 1793,

was nonsensical, and avowed atheism and secularism of the French Revolution frightened all pious Muslims.

- ◆ Yet the outbreak of the French Revolution won a respite for the Ottoman Empire from Austria and Russia, which turned to meet a France propelled by a new ideology and citizens' armies recruited from the levée en masse.
- ◆ Given previous cordial relations with the French monarchy, Selim III was surprised when the French Directory in Paris ordered Napoleon to invade Egypt. The directory ordered the expedition against Egypt on strategic grounds, foremost to overtax the Royal Navy and ultimately threaten British interests in India and lend support to Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore. Lazare Carnot, the count turned revolutionary and organizer of victory, and the artful diplomat Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand were the prime proponents for the invasion.
- ◆ Napoleon, lionized to the French public for his victories in Italy, saw the invasion to win greater victories in the footsteps of Alexander the Great. Napoleon's invasion revealed to the Islamic world of the supremacy of modern European armies on the battlefield.
- ◆ Selim III regained Egypt only by virtue of the Royal Navy, and henceforth the Porte not only needed a modern army, but an alliance with a Western power to protect the empire from attack from another Western power.
- ◆ Selim III had witnessed the French invade the heart of Dar al-Islam, smash his Mamluk army, and then withdraw because of a decisive and spectacular naval victory won by the Royal Navy. The sultan and his army had been largely bystanders, and their defeats and the British alliance were much more humiliating than the honest defeats suffered fighting the armies of Catherine the Great.
- ◆ As a result of Napoleon's invasion, the Ottoman Empire had shifted from a great power to a battlefield among rival European powers,



Napoleon Bonaparte
(1769–1821)

which saw the partition of the Ottoman Empire as inevitable. The ensuing Eastern Question of the 19th century was the dispute among the European powers as to how and when the Ottoman Empire would be partitioned.

- ◆ Furthermore, Napoleon led an unusual expedition that arrived not just to conquer and rule Egypt, but to understand, liberate, and transform Egypt by the principles of the French Revolution—the first instance of the Muslim Middle East's encounter with modernity.
- ◆ When Napoleon entered Cairo, on his own initiative he issued sweeping reforms of Ottoman society, even though he proclaimed a respectful toleration of Islam in official, printed Arabic proclamations.
- ◆ Napoleon summoned the councils (divans) of the city's districts to assemble and receive new instructions. They were to select members to a grand council headed by the pro-French Sheik al-Sharqawi. Napoleon, however, expected the councilors to learn about the rights of assembly and petition rather than administer traditional justice. At the stroke of a pen, Napoleon expected the grand divan to act as a legislature in place of the Ottoman ayans, who controlled patronage in the city since the mid-17th century.
- ◆ Napoleon also established a postal service, street lighting and sanitation, a modern mint, a French trading company, plague hospitals, and printing presses with typescript for French, Greek, and Arabic. Many of these reforms were scarcely implemented, and those that were remained confined to Cairo, but contemporary Arabic historians saw immediate results on the city's streets.
- ◆ French administration abruptly ended the Ottoman social hierarchy; the dhimmi were permitted to ride horses and carry weapons. Slavery was abolished, and to pious Muslims, French rule promised to put Muslim men on par with slaves, women, and unbelievers.

- ◆ At the same time as his reforms were transforming Islamic society, Napoleon imposed the strictest of discipline on his soldiers, who acted as liberators in the cause of the revolution, and respected members of the ulema and Muslim institutions.
- ◆ Most Muslims rejected the alien ways and reforms of an atheist, secular state based on political concept antithetical to *Şeriat*, yet this brief encounter with Western modernity ultimately proved much more destructive to the Ottoman Empire than the tsar's armies.

French administration abruptly ended the Ottoman social hierarchy.

SEЛИM III'S REFORMS

- ◆ The French occupation of Egypt undermined reform efforts of Sultan Selim III and compromised the restoration of Ottoman rule in Egypt after 1801. After the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War, Selim III initiated reforms immediately that were the most far reaching to date.
- ◆ From 1790 to 1792, Selim III was aghast by the poor discipline and mutinous behavior in the Ottoman army. Desertion rates, poor logistics, and rivalries among *ayans* commanding irregular units led directly to defeat on the battlefield.
- ◆ In 1793, Selim III cracked down on corruption and inefficiency in the spahis and Janissaries, dismissing many officers and cutting bloated military administrations. European-style organization, drill, and uniforms (with fez) were imposed in reformed battalions and companies.
- ◆ French artillerists were hired to increase the field artillery attached to infantry and to expand and modernize the imperial foundry Tophane so that the Porte henceforth could produce sufficient weapons and gunpowder.

- ◆ Selim III declared timars private property. Some timariots in Anatolia reorganized as salaried regular soldiers; many others were dispossessed and their lands reassigned. Military provisioning was revamped. The river transport on the Danube and port facilities improved for speedy delivery of grain and mutton from the Rumanian Principalities. Military purchases henceforth were at fair market prices rather than ruinously low state-fixed prices used to sustain armies in the 18th century.
- ◆ In 1793, Selim III formed a new European-style army Nizam-ı Cedid ("New Order") that was thoroughly drilled by European officers and carried the latest European weaponry. Selim III intended the Nizam-ı Cedid to supplement, and then replace, the Janissaries. Selim III also overhauled administration and finances to ensure the support of the Nizam-ı Cedid.
- ◆ Selim III assigned permanent ambassadors at the European capitals of London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and Saint Petersburg, tacitly accepting that henceforth the Porte would operate according to the rules of European diplomacy rather than the conceit of supreme power.
- ◆ Selim III had just four years to affect his reforms before Napoleon invaded Egypt, and then, in 1806, war erupted against Tsar Alexander I of Russia. But the Nizam-ı Cedid never had an opportunity to prove their worth.
- ◆ The reforms aroused bitter resentment among the Janissaries, who had vested interests in their control of Constantinople and resented the strict drill and loss of financial gain by their patronage of guilds in the supply of the army in the capital.
- ◆ The ulema was scandalized by so many reforms that were not premised on *Şeriat* and the supremacy of Islam. Furthermore, Selim III lost legitimacy in the eyes of his Arab subjects as the caliph who failed to defend Egypt against the infidel French.



Alexander I
(1777–1825)

- ◆ The first serious efforts of reform were ruined by the outbreak of another Russo-Turkish War.
- ◆ On March 25, 1802, the Treaty of Amiens ended war in Europe, and Selim concluded a formal peace with France, now under First Consul

Napoleon, and restored the French embassy and French commercial concessions. When the War of the Third Coalition erupted, Selim III remained neutral.

- ◆ After Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz in 1805, Selim aligned with the French emperor Napoleon to regain influence over Wallachia and Moldavia by deposing the pro-Russian hospodars in 1806. Alexander I declared war and ordered a Russian army of 40,000 to overrun the Rumanian Principalities, while another Russian army invaded Armenia and destroyed the Ottoman army at Arpachai.
- ◆ Selim III, who admired Napoleon, had blundered not only into a Russian war, but a war with Great Britain (then allied with Tsar Alexander I against Napoleon) at the same time.
- ◆ The Janissaries, who had already mutinied in 1806, rose in protest over the defeats and reforms with the backing of the ulema. On May 29, 1807, the Janissaries compelled Selim III to abdicate in favor of his cousin Mustafa IV, but the new sultan was powerless to prevent Janissaries from rioting and looting the capital.
- ◆ On July 7, 1807, Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I concluded their agreement at Tilsit to divide Europe. Alexander I, at Napoleon's insistence, concluded a truce with the Porte so that Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, the powerful ayan of Ruşcuk (today Bulgaria), rebelled in the name of Selim III and marched on the capital.
- ◆ Mustafa IV ordered the execution of the deposed Selim III and his half-brother Mahmud, but Mahmud escaped. In July 1808, Alemdar Mustafa Paşa occupied the capital, deposed and executed Mustafa IV, and acclaimed Mahmud II sultan.
- ◆ The new sultan Mahmud was in no position to halt Russian advances, and it was only

On October 21, 1798, an ugly revolt erupted in Cairo, which Napoleon ruthlessly crushed.

Napoleon's invasion of Russia on June 24, 1812, that ended this war with the Treaty of Bucharest on May 28.

- ◆ The Porte ceded Bessarabia (today Moldova) and western Georgia. Effective control over Wallachia and Moldavia passed to Russia, and henceforth Russian armies were free to cross the Principalities to invade the Ottoman provinces of Rumelia.
- ◆ The first serious reform had ended in yet another catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Russians, and a second one was desperately needed.
- ◆ Reactions in Cairo, the second city of the Ottoman Empire, resonated throughout the Ottoman Empire. On October 21, 1798, an ugly revolt erupted in Cairo, which Napoleon ruthlessly crushed, even bombarding the main mosque to root out the diehard rebels.
- ◆ Many Muslims saw the contraction between the professed goals of the French liberators and the offensive reality of French rule. At the same time, the sultan lost legitimacy in the eyes of his Arab subjects by his failure to protect Dar al-Islam from infidel invasion.
- ◆ For the elites of the Arab world, the fighting on the distant frontiers against the Austrians and Russians made little impression, but contemporary Arab historians of Egypt express their outrage and disbelief over Napoleon's invasion, and even more so over his reforms.
- ◆ The Albanian bey Muhammad Ali drew lessons from Napoleon's invasion, and in 1805, he seized power in Cairo and used these lessons to forge the first modern Muslim state that would challenge the Porte for the Islamic world.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What was the impact of Napoleon's invasion on the Ottoman Empire in 1798 and 1799 and the future of the Islamic Middle East?
2. What lessons did Sultan Selim III draw from the invasion of Napoleon? What was the success of his reforms, and why did they fail in 1807?

SUGGESTED READING

Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Roberts, *Napoleon the Great*.

Crisis: Muhammad Ali and Balkan Nationalists

The Porte confronted new crises soon after the withdrawal of the French army from Egypt in 1801 that called into question the fundamental institutions of the Ottoman Empire. Napoleon had discredited both the Mamluks of Cairo and the sultan as defenders of Dar al-Islam and had introduced Western political ideology and technology. Muhammad Ali, an Albanian paşa who turned himself into ruler of Egypt, admired Napoleon and understood the need to modernize economy and society to support a professional European-style army. In so doing, he created the first modern Muslim state. Yet he offered both a model and a challenge to the Porte.

MUHAMMAD ALI'S REFORMS

- ◆ Muhammad Ali exploited the confusion in Egypt after the withdrawal of Napoleon to make himself hereditary ruler and the first successful Muslim ruler to reform state and society.
- ◆ In 1801, after the French army withdrew, Egypt immediately lapsed into anarchy for the next decade until Muhammad Ali imposed order in 1811. Napoleon did not destroy so much as discredit the Janissaries and Mamluks, who had dominated Egypt since the mid-17th century. In 1801, the sultan Selim III was broke, and the Porte could not pay for the expeditionary forces recruited to expel the French from Egypt.

- ◆ In the next decade, Cairo lapsed into anarchy as warring factions of Mamluks, Janissaries, and Albanians under Muhammad Ali battled for control of Egypt. The outrageous conduct and extortion by the competing private armies made French administration look enlightened even to pious Muslims.
- ◆ In Cairo, *ayans* of the lesser household, the Greek banking and merchant community, and the ulema would support any commander who could restore order and obtain a firman of legitimacy from the sultan.
- ◆ The Arab political classes across the empire were unimpressed by the Porte's defense of Dar al-Islam in 1798 to 1801 and looked to events in Cairo, the second city of the empire and seat of the empire's most fertile and productive province.
- ◆ Muhammad owed his success to the European-style army he recruited and drilled from 1811 to replace the ethnic and local contingents, and with his modern army, he nearly conquered the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Muhammad's son Ibrahim dramatically proved the superiority of the Egyptian army in 1826, when, at the behest of Sultan Mahmud II, he landed in the Morea to battle the Greek revolutionaries.
- ◆ In the summer of 1832, the Egyptian army defeated successively three Ottoman field armies in northern Syria and crossed the Beilan Pass and then the Cilician Gates to invade Anatolia. At Konya, on December 21, 1832, Ibrahim Paşa decisively defeated a fourth Ottoman army of superior numbers and captured the commander, Mehmet Reşid Paşa. The Egyptian army was ready to march to Constantinople and overthrow the Porte in the spring of 1832.
- ◆ In February 1832, Mahmud II concluded a defensive alliance with Tsar Nicholas I, and the French and British governments, sympathetic to Muhammad Ali, intervened to arbitrate lest the Ottoman Empire



Muhammad Ali
(1769–1849)

collapse to the advantage of Russia. By the Convention of Kütahya in 1833, Muhammad Ali pledged again his fealty to the sultan Mahmud II, who issued a firman.

- ◆ Ibrahim Paşa was invested with the governorships of Syria and Adana (southeastern Anatolia), where he introduced fiscal and military reform from 1833 to 1839. The war was a fiscal and military disaster for the Porte; four field armies had gone down in defeat, and the Egyptian army had penetrated into central Anatolia.
- ◆ Never was the need for reform more urgent, but Mahmud blundered into a second war with Muhammad Ali in 1839 to 1841, even though he had been warned against such actions by the British and Russian ambassadors.
- ◆ On June 24, 1839, Ibrahim Paşa inflicted another defeat on an Ottoman army, while the Ottoman fleet in the Mediterranean defected to Muhammad Ali. On July 1, 1839, Mahmud died, and his 16-year-old son Abdül Mecit I succeeded, and the new regime was ready to offer peace on almost any terms.
- ◆ Great Britain, Austria, and Russia, however, intervened to reduce the power of Muhammad Ali, whom they perceived as aligned with France and aspiring to topple the Ottoman Empire. The three great powers concluded the Convention of London in 1840 and offered Muhammad Ali hereditary rule in Egypt and Sudan in exchange for his withdrawal from southeastern Asia Minor, Syria, and Hejaz.
- ◆ Muhammad Ali refused, and a joint Anglo-Austrian navy under the command of Commodore Charles Napier and Archduke Ferdinand captured the Levantine ports and then stormed Alexandria. On November 27, 1840, Muhammad Ali agreed to the terms of the convention.
- ◆ For Muhammad Ali, the defeat was a bitter reserve; for the reformers of Tanzimat, this second war demonstrated that a modern army



Ibrahim Paşa
(1789–1848)

alone was insufficient. The Porte had to ally with a great power and join the Concert of Europe.

- ◆ Muhammad Ali sponsored reforms in agriculture, commerce, and industry to support his professional army, the mainstay of his power. The reforms of Muhammad Ali have won praise and imitation by Arab nationalists and leaders in the Middle East today.

- ◆ Muhammad Ali learned the lessons of Napoleon, for he built schools, hospitals, and medical schools; ordered translations of European scientific and medical works into Arabic; and sent the best students to universities in Europe.
- ◆ In 35 years, Muhammad Ali had profoundly transformed Egyptian society and economy, and Cairo emerged as the literary and intellectual center of the Arabic-speaking world. Egypt was evolving into a distinct and independent society. Egyptian success provided the model for the reformers of Tanzimat, who sought to remake Ottoman society after 1839.

SERBIAN REVOLTS

- ◆ Two Serbian revolts, in 1804 to 1812 and in 1814 to 1815, resulted in Mahmud II, under pressure from the European powers, granting limited autonomy to the Serbians in the regions around Belgrade under their prince.
- ◆ Both revolts are hailed as wars of national independence and are compared to the Greek Revolution, but the Serbian rebels knew little about the ideals of the French Revolution, and their aims were initially autonomy with the Ottoman Empire rather than a nation-state. Both revolts, in many ways, were traditional ones over abuses of Janissaries, and in the 17th century, the Porte would have been easily suppressed.
- ◆ In November 1815, Miloš Obrenović agreed to reign as a vassal of the Porte in return for autonomy comparable to Ottoman arrangements in Wallachia and Rumelia. Miloš Obrenović ruled first as grand vožd and then as prince of Serbia.
- ◆ In 1815, Miloš Obrenović had himself declared hereditary prince by a hand-picked assembly, and in 1838, he obtained from Sultan Mahmud II a constitution whereby he and a council of notables ruled as an oligarchy.

- ◆ The Serbian principality of Miloš Obrenović was neither a nation-state nor a threat to the Porte. The autonomous Serbian principality of 1815 comprised the core lands of the ephemeral Habsburg "kingdom of Serbia" from 1715 to 1739, so the majority of Serbians still lived under Habsburg or Ottoman rule.
- ◆ Serbian rebels of 1804 to 1815 knew no European languages, so they were ignorant of the notions of the French Revolution. Instead, most Serbians during revolts had rallied to Orthodoxy and put their faith in Tsar Alexander I.
- ◆ But once Serbia was granted autonomy and self-government, Serbian nationalism emerged under the successors of Prince Miloš Obrenović. As the autonomous principality turned itself into a nation-state, it put itself on a collision course with both the Ottoman and Habsburg empires.

Once Serbia was granted autonomy and self-government, Serbian nationalism emerged under the successors of Prince Miloš Obrenović.

GREEK REBELLIONS

- ◆ The Greek revolutionaries in 1821 to 1829 were motivated by the ideals of revolutionary France to overthrow Ottoman rule, whereas Sultan Mahmud II treated the revolutionaries as rebels and ordered brutal retaliation.
- ◆ The Greek rebellions from 1821 to 1829, collectively called the Greek War of Independence, differed significantly from previous revolts because the Greeks proclaimed a nation-state and therefore won the sympathy of the educated philhellene political classes in western Europe and North America.
- ◆ In 1821, Greeks represented 2.5 million subjects of the Porte, but most of them did not live in the historic mainland Greece and the

Aegean islands. Numerous Greeks lived in villages of western Asia Minor, and Greek merchant communities were found in cities throughout the Balkans and Ottoman Syria and in Alexandria.

- ◆ Greek revolutionaries in 1821 to 1829 had an articulate, committed leadership who could represent their goals to the great European powers. Even more importantly, the Greeks had a receptive audience among the wealthy Europeans and Americans educated in the classics. Sentimental philhellenism in electorate and press in Great Britain, France, and the United States won widespread sympathy for the Greek cause.
- ◆ In 1821, the Ottoman Empire was unexpectedly rocked by Greek rebellions in Moldavia, Macedonia, central Greece, Morea, Crete, and Cyprus. In 1821, Sultan Mahmud II confronted, in effect, two different types of Greek rebellions that erupted in the Morea, Crete, Macedonia, and the Rumanian Principalities.
- ◆ The more familiar rebels were armed peasant brigands in the Morea or pirates in the Aegean islands turned revolutionaries, but they espoused a cause with nationalist aims. The second and much more dangerous rebels were the Greek leaders committed to full Greek independence and revival of Hellenism.
- ◆ In October 20, 1827, under questionable circumstances, Vice Admiral Edward Codrington sunk the Egyptian-Ottoman fleet in Navarino, Greece, and ended the war. The great powers—Great Britain, France, Austria, and Russia—had assured Greek victory, but in negotiations from 1828 to 1832, they limited the Greek kingdom to central Greece, the Morea, and neighboring Aegean Islands.
- ◆ The Wittelsbach prince Otto of Bavaria was invited to rule as the constitutional monarch, and in 1834, the capital was moved from Nauplia to Athens. The Porte recognized the independence of this Greek kingdom under the Treaty of London in 1832.

- ◆ The new Greek kingdom, numbering 800,000 inhabitants, comprised less than a third of the Greek population in the Ottoman Empire in 1821 (reckoned at 2.5 million). Inevitably, a new generation of Greek nationalists would seek reunification of the Greek nation under the “Great Idea,” a revival of a Byzantine state with its capital at Constantinople and embracing lands in the Balkans and Asia Minor deemed to be part of the historic home to Hellenism.
- ◆ Mahmud II, however, could take little comfort in the resolution of the Greek war, for he agreed to a precedent that each of his diverse subjects were entitled to its own nation-state and therefore put in jeopardy the Ottoman system of government through the millet. Muhammad Ali emerged from the conflict even more powerful and soon challenged the Porte.
- ◆ The danger of losing both the Balkans and Arab province threatened to destroy the power of the Ottoman state; it was now time to modernize state and society.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did Muhammad Ali offer a model for the Porte to modernize the Ottoman Empire? What accounted for his extraordinary success?
2. How did the Serbian rebellions from 1804 to 1815 and the Greek War of Independence threaten both the territorial and institutional integrity of the Ottoman Empire?

SUGGESTED READING

Jelavich and Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States*.

Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*.

Tanzimat and Modernization, 1839–1876

On November 3, 1839, the sultan Abdül Mecit I issued the *Gülhane Edict*, calling for Tanzimat, or reorganization of the Ottoman state. The ensuing reforms were the work of three ministers—Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Mehmet Emin Âli Paşa, and Mehmet Fuad Paşa—who aimed to strengthen the central government and redefined the Porte as a modern government administered by conscientious bureaucrats and technical experts promoted by merit. The sultan continued to reign as a source of legitimacy under *Şeriat*, but in a palace and manner comparable to European constitutional monarchs. But Tanzimat failed to achieve its primary goal: to safeguard the integrity of the empire.

REFORMS OF SELIM III AND MAHMUD II

- ◆ The reforms of Sultans Selim III and Mahmud II laid the foundation for much more comprehensive reforms of Tanzimat.
- ◆ Selim III had achieved limited success with his reforms, but his reforms, after he was deposed on May 29, 1807, were abolished, and the new army, Nizam-ı Cedid, was disbanded. The failure of Selim III underscored the primacy of *Şeriat* and the importance of effective central power in instituting reform. The ulema was consulted to determine whether any reform based on Western ideas or technology was consistent with *Şeriat*.

- ◆ Even the reformers of Tanzimat paid homage to this tradition in the preamble of the Gülhane Edict of 1839. These two dangers are epitomized by the Janissaries, who overthrew Selim III in 1807; they mutinied in objection to the style of the fez as a Western import not sanctified under *Şeriat*.
- ◆ Mahmud II achieved limited successes in reform after he crushed the Janissaries on June 15, 1826. Mahmud II deserves credit for achieving significant reform while he confronted two wars with Muhammad Ali of Egypt, Greek revolutionaries, and aggression by the French and Russians.
- ◆ Mahmud is compared to Peter the Great of Russia, but he instead sought to emulate Selim III and surpass his hated rival Muhammad Ali of Egypt. Mahmud II, unlike Peter the Great, could only make limited use of foreign experts and lacked the officials and experts trained in Western languages to implement his reforms. This deficiency was most evident in his army, which, despite his best efforts, was no match for the Egyptian army in 1831 to 1833 and 1839 to 1840.
- ◆ Beyond the capital, Mahmud II's reforms reached few, even in the provincial capitals, but he created new elite families in Constantinople from whose ranks came the reforming ministers, army officers, intellectuals, and even revolutionaries who transformed the Ottoman Empire in the next two generations.

TANZIMAT

- ◆ The Ottoman statesmen who directed Tanzimat ("Reorganization") from 1839 to 1871 built on the reforms of Mahmud II to reorder both state and society and to preserve the empire, but in so doing they assured the demise of the traditional Porte.
- ◆ Tanzimat represented a response to the war threats posed by Muhammad Ali of Egypt, the Greek revolutionaries, and the great

European powers. These reforms were issued during two discrete periods, from 1840 to 1852 and from 1856 to 1876.

- ◆ On November 3, 1839, Sultan Abdül Mecit I proclaimed the first reform period in the *Gülhane Edict*, or *Hatt-i Şerif* of *Gülhane* ("Noble Edict of the Rose Chamber"). The same sultan issued a second imperial rescript recalling for new reforms in the *Hatt-ı Hümâyûn* of February 18, 1856.
- ◆ In each case, reform depended on a dedicated minister. The first period, to 1852, was the brainchild of Mustafa Reşid Paşa; the second period was the work of his two protégés and successors, Mehmet Emin Âli Paşa and Mehmet Fuad Paşa.
- ◆ Each period of reform was interrupted by political crisis that led to criticism: the Crimean War (from 1853 to 1856) and the Russo-Turkish



Crimean War, 1853–1856

War. The second period ended with the first Ottoman Parliament in 1876, elected—or, more accurately, selected—by new local councils of ayans in the provincial capitals.

- ◆ The reformers of Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Mehmet Emin Âli Paşa and Mehmet Fuad Paşa, redefined the Porte to mean central government from Istanbul directed by modern professional ministers and bureaucrats selected by merit and expertise (and therefore open to dhimmi) and acting in the name of the sultan, who was to be an Islamic constitutional monarch.
- ◆ These three men who made Tanzimat shared similar experiences in their careers, so they were motivated by the same goals.
- ◆ The goal of modernization was to increase power of the central government by creating a single, rational, professional bureaucratic state that administered justice to all citizens regardless of faith or ethnicity. In effect, they wished to redefine the Porte as the government by conscientious Ottoman experts, and their careers and lives were examples of the ideal professional Ottoman official.
- ◆ This drive to modernize and centralize was intended to strengthen the Porte against the aggression of the great powers and to ensure the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. They were assisted by the fact that since the demise of Selim III in 1807, more and more pious conservatives were willing to adapt Western institutions and innovations to preserve the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Foremost, the legal reforms and the first Ottoman Parliament were never intended to establish the rule of law for citizens and the legislature of a Western constitution. The Ottoman Parliament summoned in 1876 was conceived as a body giving its assent based on *Şeriat* rather than passing laws.
- ◆ The Parliament sometimes hailed as the climax of Tanzimat was, in truth, summoned after the demise of Tanzimat and proved a

disappointment from the start. Hence, the European terms "liberals" and "conservatives" applied to Ottoman statesmen in the 19th century were misleading.

- ◆ In their domestic reforms, the men of Tanzimat looked to France, but in terms of a diplomatic alliance, they favored Great Britain. Therefore, the men of Tanzimat differed from the previous reformist sultans Selim III and Mahmud II in two ways: They aimed for much more comprehensive reform than just modernizing the military, and theirs were collective reforms of a progressive elite rather than of an autocrat.
- ◆ The reforms of the first period were less controversial than those of the second period, because their aim was to transform the Porte into a modern European-style national government that delivered justice, defense, and modern services.
- ◆ The preamble of the Gülhane Edict of 1839 promised justice and security for all Ottoman citizens so that, even though vaguely worded, it set forth a new legal Ottoman identity.
- ◆ In 1840, Mustafa Reşid, at the head of a new council of Tanzimat, revised public finances, established a modern postal service, and set up an Ottoman national bank. The Porte borrowed heavily from European investors to meet its interest payments and deficits, and the Porte defaulted in 1875.
- ◆ Banking and currency reforms financed the modernizing projects. Modern universities and technical and teachers' colleges were ordered with the aim of expanding the number of modern civil servants. Modern municipal services and transportation for Istanbul were established or improved.

The Ottoman economy in the 19th century never generated sufficient capital to fund its own industrialization.

- ◆ Tanzimat intended to create a new Ottoman identity common to all the sultan's citizens that replaced the earlier organization by Muslims and unbelievers, and free and slave. Hence, in 1847, slavery and the slave trade were abolished—a measure applauded in European diplomatic circles.
- ◆ All of these reforms marked an important shift in the perception of Western success among the Ottoman ruling class. Modernization (or Westernization) was no longer a matter of adopting Western weapons, but rather it was unlocking the secrets of the political and constitutional foundations that promoted prosperity and the loyalty of citizens in the West. This new perception was shared not only by conservative reformers, but also by most of the critics in the next generation.
- ◆ The Imperial Edict of February 18, 1856 (Hatt-ı Hümâyûn), marked a revolutionary change in intent and aims of reform, so it provoked widespread opposition across the empire. The edict declared all Ottoman citizens equal before the law and all adult males within the empire eligible for conscription.
- ◆ Âli Paşa and Fuad Paşa continued with legal reforms—notably, land code, penal code, mixed courts for commercial contracts, and maritime codes. Many of these laws after 1856 addressed issues arising from the abolition of timars and *vakif*, projects to promote economic development, and expansion of commerce with Europe.
- ◆ Entrance into the world capitalist market, dominated by the West, promoted diverse markets within the Ottoman Empire. Each of these regional markets was linked to specific trading partners and hardly formed a single integrated Ottoman economy. As a result, the Ottoman economy in the 19th century never generated sufficient capital to fund its own industrialization.

THE SUCCESS OF TANZIMAT

- ◆ The success of Tanzimat was, at best, mixed, and in many provinces, it was received with hostility, evasion, and protest.
- ◆ In the Arabic provinces, the administrative reforms of Tanzimat reintegrated the Arab lands of the Fertile Crescent back into the empire, but it widened the chasm between Constantinople and the Arab provinces of the Maghreb and Egypt.
- ◆ In Syria and Iraq, the second period of reform included reorganization of provincial boundaries that cut across ethnic and confessional lines. In Aleppo, Damascus, and Mosul, ugly riots erupted in 1860 over the laws granting equality to Christians and Jews; the Ottoman army had to restore order.
- ◆ By 1870, professional Ottoman officials, in contact with Constantinople by telegraph and railway, were cementing ties with the local elites in the Arab provinces of Syria, Iraq, and Libya. They ended tax farming, enforced new tax and property laws, and tied these peripheral provinces more closely to Istanbul. The traditional *ayans* of the Fertile Crescent and Libya were co-opted as representative provincial councils who later sent representative to the first Parliament in 1876.
- ◆ In Tunisia and Egypt, the reforms of Tanzimat severed ties with these nominal provinces, which paid an annual tribute to Constantinople. Ismail Paşa of Egypt, recognized as Khedive in 1867, and Muhammad III as-Sadiq, bey of Tunis, implemented those reforms that strengthened their own position as independent sovereigns.
- ◆ Throughout the Ottoman Empire, Tanzimat, by its success and failure, widened the gap between those of the Ottoman ruling class and the majority of the population. In Constantinople, Izmir, and Thessaloniki, an educated, urban class emerged trained in

Western languages and with an appetite for Western fashions, cuisine, household furnishing, arts and literature, and music.

- ◆ By 1875, Istanbul was an international city home to a sophisticated Turkish Muslim class that enjoyed symphonic music, ballet, and modern theater and read novels and newspapers. They were beneficiaries of Tanzimat, but in most of the empire, Tanzimat had much less impact on the lives of ordinary people. Furthermore, by the very breath of the reforms, Tanzimat had generated not only widespread criticism, but new means to express dissent, in newspapers, journals, and novels.
- ◆ Therefore, for all its success, Tanzimat widened divisions within Ottoman society and therefore failed to strengthen the Porte. Instead, it bankrupted the Porte. It failed to halt European imperialist aggression, to ensure the integrity of the empire, and, most of all, to win for the Ottoman Empire the respectful status as a member of the Concert of Europe.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How important were the reforms of Mahmud II in laying the foundation for the more comprehensive reforms of Tanzimat? How sound were the aims and premises of the reforms promoted by Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Mehmet Emin Ali Paşa, and Mehmet Fuad Paşa?
2. What was the long-term impact of Tanzimat? Did these reforms ultimately strengthen or weaken the Ottoman Empire?

SUGGESTED READING

Findley, "The Tanzimat."

Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*.

Defeat and Retreat: The Sick Man of Europe

The Ottoman Empire, in alliance with Great Britain and France, checked the Russian foe in the Crimean War. The terms of the Treaty of Paris vindicated the reforms of Tanzimat as well as the adroit diplomacy of Mustafa Reşid Paşa based on an alliance with Great Britain. From 1875 to 1876, national revolts in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria escalated to an international crisis and then a new Russo-Turkish War. But the Porte faced tsarist Russia without allies, and the army of Tanzimat was overwhelmed. The great powers determined the territorial arrangements of the defeated Porte at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Defeat raised new questions about who would direct Ottoman reform: the professional ministers, the newly proclaimed Ottoman Parliament, or the sultan Abdül Hamid II.

THE CRIMEAN WAR

- ◆ On January 9th, 1853, the tsar of Russia, Nicholas I, uttered a remark to the British ambassador to Saint Petersburg, George Hamilton Seymour, that the Ottoman Empire was sick. Nicholas I floated by a cynical deal of partitioning the Ottoman Empire, in which Russia would take over control of the Straits, the crucial lifeline that would link Russian ports on the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and the wider world market. In return, Britain could have Egypt, which was important on the route to India, and Crete.

- ◆ The deal was communicated back to London. Lord John Russell remarked that the Ottoman Empire was the “sick man of Europe” and presented the cynical deal to Lord Aberdeen and his coalition government. The objective of Russell was to excite the government into an alliance with France and eventually oppose Russian ambitions in the Ottoman Empire. This exchange was one of the causes for the outbreak of the Crimean War.
- ◆ The Crimean War vindicated the reformers of Tanzimat, who had undertaken domestic reform to modernize the army, defend the integrity of the empire, and win Ottoman membership within the Concert of Europe.
- ◆ Mustafa Reşid Paşa and Mehmet Fuad Paşa were both well known for favoring Great Britain, but they represented the opinion of many in Constantinople who saw the alliance with Great Britain as the cornerstone of Ottoman foreign policy.
- ◆ In 1798 to 1801 and in 1840, the Royal Navy intervened decisively to save the Porte from Napoleon Bonaparte and Muhammad Ali, respectively. In 1827, the Royal Navy, to the dismay of Mahmud II, sunk the Egyptian-Ottoman navy at Navarino and therefore assured Greek independence. The Royal Navy alone could check Russian aggression against the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Austria, the traditional foe in the Balkans, under Prince Klemens von Metternich, chancellor and foreign minister, collaborated with Emperors Alexander I and Nicholas I to preserve conservatism in post-Napoleonic Europe.
- ◆ France, while the inspiration for so many of the domestic reforms of Tanzimat, had seized Algiers in 1830, consistently allied with Muhammad Ali of Egypt, and aggressively expanded its influence over the Maghreb.



Tzar of Russia, Nicholas I
(1796–1855)

- ◆ Great Britain had long-standing interests in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, but British interests were served by negotiation for commercial rights, use of ports, and alliances with local rulers who could still protest their loyalty to the Porte rather than imperial conquest.
- ◆ In 1838, the Porte negotiated with the Balta Liman commercial treaty of 1838, which offered favorable terms to British imports. The concession secured British goodwill in the second war with Muhammad Ali, but it quickly led to an imbalance of payments as British manufactured goods ruined the indigenous handicraft goods. Yet British cabinets long avoided foreign entanglements and the onus of direct administration of overseas colonies.
- ◆ Mustafa Reşid Paşa, who had served as ambassador to London, appreciated British imperial interests in a global context, so he adroitly guided Ottoman foreign policy down to 1852. Mustafa Reşid Paşa turned to British officers for modernizing the Ottoman fleet from 1843 to 1844, and the British capital and technical expertise were essential for the economic reforms of Tanzimat.
- ◆ British officers who seconded to the service of the Porte had a favorable impression of Turkish officers and soldiers, whom they saw as an imperial people comparable to the martial races recruited into the armies of the raj. Furthermore, during the first phase of Tanzimat, British and Ottomans shared a common foe in Russia. Both viewed with alarm Russian expansion into central Asia and Iran.
- ◆ The Porte never forgot that it had been powerless to prevent the Russian conquest of Circassia and Dagestan from 1828 to 1829 and the massacre and expulsion of thousands of Muslims. The Porte, for the first time, received numerous Muslim refugees displaced by a victorious Christian power.
- ◆ The diplomatic moves that precipitated the First Afghan War marked a turning point in the so-called Great Game, for it inclined British

political classes to see the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian expansion.

- ◆ But, as Mustafa Reşid Paşa was all too aware, British governments were reluctant to commit armies, and they preferred to champion free trade as a means of dominating overseas markets. Diplomacy alone did not suffice, and reformers expanded and reorganized the army of Mahmud II, *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*, which had failed to match the Egyptian army of Muhammad Ali.
- ◆ This Ottoman imperial army used a modified version of European conscription to induce enlistment from the frontier and lowest classes. Yet even this imperial army proved inadequate given the high losses in the Crimean War, and the Porte levied irregular units and summoned units from Abbas Hilmi of Egypt, which were still among the best in the Muslim world.
- ◆ The Ottoman army lacked the industrial capacity to sustain large modern armies in a sustained major conflict, but even more telling was the inability of the Ottoman government to enter into the arms race that originated in the 1840s.
- ◆ From the 1840s, military technology progressed at an evermore-rapid rate, and proponents of Tanzimat in 1839 could not have foreseen the dramatic changes in weaponry (especially in naval armaments) and the spiraling costs of war in 1853.
- ◆ The Ottoman army in 1853 had never been stronger, but even so, it was not a match for the tsar's soldiers. To his credit in 1853, Mustafa Reşid Paşa perceived the weaknesses of the Ottoman army and long advocated diplomacy over war.
- ◆ The international crisis from 1850 to 1853 over a French-Russian dispute escalated

The Ottoman army lacked the industrial capacity to sustain large modern armies in a sustained major conflict.

into a general European war that threatened both Tanzimat and the very existence of the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ Although Mustafa Reşid Paşa initially opposed war, because the sultan and the majority were bent on war, he gave his patriotic assent. During the fateful months just before the declaration of war, Mustafa Reşid had influence and worked to sway the British and French into supporting the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, their declaration of war on Russia on March 24, 1853, was a diplomatic victory for both Reşid Paşa and the Porte.
- ◆ The Ottoman army and navy alone could not hope to match Russia, but the intervention of Great Britain and France shifted the war to Crimea, spared the empire the ravages of war, and delivered victory.
- ◆ The belligerents negotiated the Treaty of Paris on March 30, 1856. The treaty represented a strategic victory for the Porte, but it came at a high price, for during desultory fighting along the Danube and the Caucasus, a third of the field armies had been lost to disease and malnutrition.
- ◆ Under the treaty, all signatories assured the territorial integrity and the admission of the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe. It furthermore spelled out that no power had to interfere with the sultan's right to deal with his subjects, ruling out any future claims of France or Russia to represent the interests of Ottoman Christians.
- ◆ Russia, under the new tsar Alexander II, had to dismantle naval dockyards and arsenals on the Black Sea and send no warships into the Black Sea, effectively demilitarizing the sea to the Porte's advantage. Serbia and the Rumanian Principalities were declared autonomous under an Ottoman suzerainty, but the signatories of the peace guaranteed their integrity—a dangerous precedent for Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

- ◆ The Ottoman army was in need of reorganization and refitting, hence the introduction of universal conscription in 1856. Between 1856 and 1876, the Ottoman floated 10 major loans on European markets to purchase the latest weaponry from Krupp, and this heavy borrowing led to the Porte's defaulting on its loans in 1875.

THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

- ◆ Ottoman victory in 1856 inspired a second wave of even more ambitious reforms of Tanzimat, but 20 years later, the Ottoman Empire, diplomatically isolated and fiscally broke, suffered a catastrophic defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 to 1878.
- ◆ The Treaty of Paris of 1856 vindicated the reforms of Tanzimat and the diplomacy of Mustafa Reşid Paşa. During the negotiations that led to the treaty, Sultan Abdül Mecit issued the Imperial Edict of February 18, 1856 (Hatt-ı Hümâyûn), declaring Ottoman citizens of all faiths equal under the law. This declaration opened many more revolutionary reforms under Tanzimat and galvanized criticism among educated Turks and members of the ulema.
- ◆ Dissident intellectuals formed the secret society the Young Ottomans in 1865, and the writer Namık Kemal set the standard for using the printing press as a means to dissent. Outlawing the Young Ottomans simply removed them to exile in Paris, London, and Geneva, from where they carried out even more effective campaigns against the tyranny of the bureaucrats of Tanzimat.
- ◆ The architects of Tanzimat died between 1859 and 1871; with the death of Mehmet Emin Âli Paşa in 1871, no statesman of comparable stature emerged on behalf of reform. On June 2, 1861, Sultan Abdül Mecit I, a man committed to reform, and his brother Abdül Aziz, a confirmed libertine, succeeded.



Russo-Turkish War of 1877 to 1878

- ◆ The new generation of reformers called for constitutional change and the creation of a Parliament to restrain both sultan and the professional bureaucracy of Tanzimat. To these reformers, the defeat of Napoleon III by Prussia in 1871 discredited the French model used by the reformers of Tanzimat, so they turned to the constitution of liberal Great Britain as their model.
- ◆ Ahmet Şefik Midhat Paşa, twice grand vizier, was the most articulate spokesman for constitutional reform. On May 30, 1876, Ahmet he deposed Abdül Aziz, who reputedly committed suicide on June 4, 1876. His nephew Murat V was declared sultan, and he was known to favor constitutional reform, but the promising reign ended quickly because he lapsed into severe mental depression and was retired on August 31, 1876. His unassuming younger brother Abdül Hamid II ascended the throne, promising constitutional reform and the first Ottoman Parliament, but events were to turn out quite differently.
- ◆ In 1876, during the succession crisis that witnessed three sultans in three months, the Ottoman Empire was at war with the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro and Christian insurgents in Herzegovina, Bosnia, and Bulgaria. Simultaneously, the Porte lost the British connection.
- ◆ In June 1876, Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Porte, but their armies went down in defeat. On April 24, 1877, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman army, despite heroic stands in fortress cities in the Caucasus and Bulgaria, was overwhelmed, and by late 1877, the Russians threatened to capture Constantinople.
- ◆ On March 3, 1878, the tsarist government, with the Russian army in sight of Constantinople, dictated the Treaty of San Stefano. The

The terms of the treaty of San Stefano destroyed Ottoman power in the Balkans.

Ottoman high command, despite the bravery of Ottoman soldiers, had been strategically outmaneuvered and outfought.

- ◆ The terms of the treaty of San Stefano destroyed Ottoman power in the Balkans, but the other great powers, at the direction of Otto von Bismarck, chancellor of Germany, redrew the map to limit Russian victory and preserve the Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Berlin.
- ◆ Under the Treaty of San Stefano, the Porte surrendered its sovereignty over Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania, which were recognized as independent states. The eyalet of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the vital Ottoman recruiting grounds since the mid-15th century, was declared autonomous. An independent Bulgaria, under Russian protection, was declared.
- ◆ The extent of Russian victory shocked the other great powers—foremost Benjamin Disraeli and Otto von Bismarck, but even Vienna was stunned. Otto von Bismarck summoned all the great powers to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, where he cynically posed as the honest broker to redraw the map at San Stefano in the interests of avoiding a major European conflict.
- ◆ Otto von Bismarck indeed averted a general European war, conciliating Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Russia and isolating France. Even so, Sultan Abdül Hamid II, who soon asserted his personal autocracy over the empire, could not help but see Germany as the ally to replace an untrustworthy Great Britain.
- ◆ Furthermore, only renewed strength could save the empire, and Sultan Abdül Hamid II was determined to provide it and restore the Ottoman Empire the status of a great power. To do so, he had to reckon with the constitutional reformists, and the Parliament was proclaimed on December 23, 1876.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What was the significance of the Crimean War to the Ottoman Empire? How did it reveal both the successes and weaknesses of Tanzimat?
2. What accounted for Ottoman decline after 1856 and defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 and 1878? Did the Congress of Berlin mark the Ottoman Empire as the “sick man of Europe”?

SUGGESTED READING

Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*.

The Sultan Returns: Abdül Hamid II, 1876–1908

Since 1865, a new generation of reformers, the Young Ottomans, had called for a constitution that would win back respect for the Ottoman Empire by the great powers and initiate new reforms. In 1876, Ahmet Şefik Midhat Paşa, the leading proponent for constitutional rule, exploited the succession crisis to secure from the new sultan Abdül Hamid II the promise of the Ottoman Parliament. The Parliament only met twice, and then Abdül Hamid II suspended it for the next 30 years. In 1889, new critics, the Young Turks, called for a return to constitutional rule, and in 1908, they compelled Sultan Abdül Hamid II to relinquish power and call for elections for a new Parliament.

THE FIRST OTTOMAN CONSTITUTION AND PARLIAMENT

- ◆ Fiscal crisis in 1875, rebellions from 1875 to 1876, and the international crisis that led to the Russo-Turkish War compelled the new sultan Abdül Hamid II to proclaim the first Ottoman constitution on December 23, 1876, which is still hailed as a turning point.
- ◆ Since 1865, Young Ottoman critics had called for a constitution as a check on the growing tyranny of the ministers and bureaucrats of Tanzimat. Many Young Ottomans wanted a central government accountable to the Muslim majority, and they premised their ideas on Koranic notions of consultation and assent.

- ◆ Some called for a free order inspired by Western liberalism but tempered and consistent with Islamic values of consultation. None of the Young Ottomans wanted to overturn the fundamental Islamic values of society, and they pointed to the symbiosis of the sultan's law and *Şeriat* of the classical Ottoman state.
- ◆ With the proliferation of printing presses and the emergence of literate political class, the Young Ottomans disseminated calls for a Parliament and a constitution. The Young Ottomans, outlawed in 1867, simply went underground or relocated to European capitals—notably, Geneva, Paris, and London. They advanced powerful examples of contemporary Parliaments in southeastern Europe and the Middle East.
- ◆ Within the Ottoman Empire, the autonomous regions with Christian populations in Mount Lebanon in 1864 and Crete in 1866 adopted deliberative assemblies. The bey of Tunis, Muhammad III as-Sadiq, an Ottoman vassal, proclaimed the first Muslim constitution in 1861. The passing of the architects of Tanzimat from 1859 to 1871 and a shift in the sympathies of Sultan Abdül Aziz led him to grant an amnesty to the exiled dissidents, who were free to return home.
- ◆ In 1872, Sultan Abdül Aziz, facing a mounting debt, made grand vizier Ahmet Şefik Midhat Paşa, with a distinguished career in provincial administration and an articulate proponent of constitutionalism. His appointment as grand vizier only lasted a few months, but he served in lesser ministerial positions and pressed the sultan for constitutional reform.
- ◆ A convergence of crises in 1876 returned Midhat Paşa to the office of grand vizier, and the declaration of the first Ottoman Parliament occurred on December 23, 1876.

None of the Young Ottomans wanted to overturn the fundamental Islamic values of society.

- ◆ The succession crisis in 1876 provided the opportunity for the summoning of the first Ottoman Parliament, but the mounting crisis with Russia was the prime cause because Midhat Paşa and the constitutionalists believed that a constitution would win over the other great powers, who would readmit the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe and check Russia.
- ◆ The first Ottoman constitution and Parliament were never given a fair chance, and 11 months after they were proclaimed, the sultan Abdül Hamid II constitutionally suspended both. Hurriedly, a commission of 24 legalists (including members of the ulema) drew up the Ottoman constitution based on the Belgian constitution of 1831.
- ◆ Between January and March 1877 (as war with Russia loomed) elections were conducted throughout the Ottoman Empire for the first time. Governors and local councils or ayans swayed voters, and there were allegations of widespread fraud.
- ◆ Based on the census of 1844, proportional representation by faith ensured that Christian and Jews would be represented in the Chamber of Deputies, the main legislative house. This feature aroused protests from Muslims that the dhimmi were disproportionately represented.
- ◆ Many Ottoman officials, former tax collectors, and ayans of the local councils (divan) were elected so that the Chamber of Deputies was hardly revolutionary and, more importantly, had no sense of its powers, the rules of debate, or even the rule of law in a Western sense.
- ◆ On March 19, 1877, the Parliament held its first session; it met once again, with fewer delegates, on December 13, 1877. Sultan Abdül Hamid II exercised his constitutional right to prorogue the Parliament, which dissolved and did not meet for the next 30 years. He dispensed with constitutional consent and centralized his personal autocracy after 1878.

- ◆ Abdül Hamid II was angered that the constitution was ignored by the delegates of the Western powers. It failed to win Western support against Russia or to elevate to the status of a respected power. The demise of the Ottoman Parliament settled the issue of who would direct modernization of state and society.
- ◆ The proponents of Tanzimat pinned their hopes on creating professional classes of experts promoted by merit. Their vision had spawned the constitutional opponents championing popular consent, even if they were divided on the nature and power of this electorate. The failure of constitutionalism, during a disastrous war and fiscal crisis, left as the only alternative the return of the sultan.

ABDÜL HAMID II

- ◆ Abdül Hamid II promoted important reforms of Tanzimat that transformed the Ottoman Empire, but his personal autocracy revived Ottoman power, and he tied the Porte to an alliance with Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II.
- ◆ Abdül Hamid II is today the most controversial sultan among Turkish historians and the Turkish public. Although his mission was to restore the empire and to promote Osmanlık, an Ottoman rather than Turkish citizenship based on personal loyalty, his concept of citizenship based on the millet failed. The price of failure was the sectarian and ethnic bloodshed in the Balkans and Middle East down to this day.
- ◆ Abdül Hamid II expanded the liaison offices between the palace and the ministries and therefore created a personal bureaucracy. He never abolished the constitution of 1876, even though he ruled as an authoritarian autocrat. Under the constitution, he was empowered to appoint a minister responsible to him, so he was admired by his friend Kaiser Wilhelm II.

- ◆ His appointments were sound rather than frivolous; in 30 years, he personally appointed and dismissed 25 grand viziers. He regarded the Parliament as merely an expanded advisory council, so he dispensed with it after 1878. Under the constitution, he had the right to exile political agitators so that those expressing criticism and dissent were branded as traitors.
- ◆ Yet, in many ways, Abdül Hamid II turned the economic and social reforms of Tanzimat into social reality. He implemented one of the most important, and last, acts of Tanzimat, the Public Education Regulation of 1869, which called for the increase of public education. He promoted the building of factories, rapid development of steamship service, and construction of railways.
- ◆ Ultimately, Abdül Hamid II was limited in the reforms he could effect, because modernization projects were funded on foreign capital. As a result of the fiscal crisis of 1875 and a long-term global depression, the Porte faced declining revenues and rising public debt. After 1881, he slashed bureaucracy, but so many revenues went to the Public Debt Administration to pay off investors.
- ◆ Even so, the years between 1878 and 1908 witnessed considerable progress in improving the infrastructure of the empire and the quality of life for many Ottomans. Prosperity and benefits were unevenly distributed, but in the capital and provincial centers, a



Abdül Hamid II
(1842–1918)

modern educated Muslim elite grew evermore wealthy and evermore articulate and critical of the sultan.

- ◆ In foreign affairs, Sultan Hamid Abdül II realigned the Ottoman Empire with the new German Reich proclaimed in 1871, and this relationship carried significant benefits and dangers.
- ◆ At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck took no territorial advantage or economic concessions from the Ottoman Empire. Imperial Germany had no territorial ambitions in the Ottoman Empire, in contrast to the other great powers.
- ◆ Hamid Abdül II reequipped the Ottoman army with Krupp artillery and Mauser rifles in the period of 1878 to 1897. Wilhelm Leopold Colmar von der Goltz, a leading staff officer and military writer, created the Ottoman General Staff (*Erkan-ı Harb*), improved the education of officers, and imposed German corps organization on the army.
- ◆ As a result, the Ottoman army handily defeated the Greek army in a brief war over Crete when the Christian population rose in revolt against the Muslim population and Ottoman administration from 1895 to 1896 and proclaimed *enosis*, or union, with Greece.
- ◆ The Ottoman army overran Thessaly and burst into central Greece, but the great powers intervened to limit Ottoman victory. Crete was granted autonomy under international guarantee in 1908 and united with Greece in 1913.
- ◆ Otto von Bismarck, who held the Ottoman Empire in benevolent contempt, was dismissed as chancellor by the erratic Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1890. Wilhelm II genuinely admired both the Ottoman Empire and Sultan Hamid Abdül II.
- ◆ In 1878, Hamid Abdül II had to accept the territorial losses under the Congress of Berlin. The boundaries of the Ottoman Empire

after 1878 were indefensible, and Hamid Abdül II had little choice but to recognize later losses.

- ◆ Hamid Abdül II faced his most difficult challenge in the six eastern provinces, home to perhaps 1 million Armenians in 1878. Armenian intellectuals formed revolutionary parties to commit terrorist acts and therefore compel the intervention of the great powers and the grant of autonomy or independence to the Armenians in eastern Anatolia. The violence climaxed in a massacre of Armenians at Sasun in 1896 that earned Hamid Abdül II the hatred of Armenians and the title Red Sultan.
- ◆ Sectarian fighting and massacres from 1895 to 1896 swept the six eastern provinces. Ottoman officials were often in no position to enforce order. Hamid Abdül II weathered this crisis because the great powers were not interested in the Armenians, but the problem of Armenian nationalism remained. However, by his suppression of dissent, he assured his ultimate downfall when a Balkan crisis emerged over the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908.
- ◆ In 1889, progressive and liberal medical students in the military academies formed a society, the Young Turks, as the loyal opposition to the sultan Abdül Hamid and to restore parliamentary rule under the constitution of 1876.



Otto von Bismarck
(1815–1898)

- ◆ The Young Turks held two congresses in Paris in 1902 and 1907, but they failed to agree on platform or action, and leadership was split between Ahmet Riza, a charismatic scientist, and Prince Sabahaddin, a nephew of Abdül Hamid II.
- ◆ Meanwhile, officers at Salonica formed a branch of the Young Turks, *Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, or the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). By means of the CUP, these officers turned the Young Turks from a debating club into a revolutionary action committee.
- ◆ In April 1908, they exploited the widespread disaffection in the Ottoman Third Army based in Salonica over the rising disorders in Macedonia to stage a mutiny and to demand the restoration of the Parliament. In July, the Third Army threatened to march on Constantinople, and disaffection spread to the First Army in the capital. On the night of July 23–24, Sultan Abdül Hamid II was forced to announce the restoration of constitutional rule and the call for a new Parliament.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Did the constitution and first Ottoman Parliament of 1876 offer a realistic chance for Ottoman reform and recovery? How did the international scene, the actions of Sultan Abdül Hamid II, and the internal weaknesses within the constitution contribute to its failure?
2. In what ways did the personal autocracy of Sultan Abdül Hamid II consolidate and advance the reforms of Tanzimat? Why was he overthrown in 1909?

SUGGESTED READING

Fortana, "The Reign of Abdülhamid II."

Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Constitutional Reform, 1908–1913

The political classes of the Ottoman Empire hailed the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 as the return of a freely elected Parliament that would implement reform and secure the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Officers of the Third Army at Salonica who comprised the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) staged a comparatively bloodless revolution. On the evening of July 23–24, 1908, Sultan Abdül Hamid II promised to summon Parliament under the Constitution of 1876. This second Ottoman Parliament represented relatively accurately the diverse electorate. Yet constitutional rule faltered almost immediately.

THE RISE OF THE CUP

- ◆ The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 is considered to have marked the second constitutional period and raised hopes across the empire for imperial recovery and reform, but the revolution ended with the domination by the CUP, which ended meaningful constitutional rule.
- ◆ The officers of the Third Army stationed in Salonica toppled the autocracy of Sultan Abdül Hamid II on July 23–24, 1908, but they lacked a coherent program for either reform or a revolution.
- ◆ The Young Turks comprised a diverse array of opponents to Sultan Abdül Hamid, but the two important wings in 1908 were the exiled intellectuals in Geneva and Paris and disaffected officers and petty

officials at Salonica of the CUP. The Arabic intellectual dissidents in Cairo, operating under the protection of the British administration, did not play a role in the events of 1908.

- ◆ The CUP aimed to suppress the insurgencies in Macedonia and to replace an incompetent Sultan Abdül Hamid II. The CUP never formulated a coherent ideology for a revolution. In part, they had too many ideologies from which to choose. As professional, Turkish-speaking officers, they put order and survival of the empire first, and from the start, they were accustomed to issuing order rather than debating.
- ◆ Although the CUP embraced the Ottomanism of the late 19th century, in many ways they equated Ottoman citizenship with a Turkish identity. For the CUP, the constitution and Parliament of 1876 were merely means to an end rather than a goal to establish the rule of law.
- ◆ Therefore, the CUP was willing to go through any lengths to defend the empire so that they were never prepared to overthrow the existing order and build a new one in the fashion of the Bolsheviks.
- ◆ They were still influenced by the Ottoman and Islamic legacy, and just like Mahmud II, the architects of Tanzimat, Midhat Paşa, and even Sultan Abdül Hamid II, they were inclined to preserve rather than change.
- ◆ Marxism never penetrated as an ideology among Ottoman dissidents. Despite posturing to represent the will of the people, the CUP never produced a charismatic, populist leader comparable to Hitler or Lenin who could rally mass support for a revolution in the name of an ideology. Hence, the events of 1908 resulted in a revolution *manqué* rather than a true revolution.
- ◆ On the evening of July 23–24, 1908, Sultan Abdül Hamid II preserved his throne and headed off revolutionary violence by merely calling for new elections for the Parliament under the constitution of 1876.

- ◆ Suffrage was not universal, and many Arabs, Greeks, and Armenians protested or boycotted because they would not be well represented, so they demanded a quota system. Yet the election returns reflected accurately the ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of the empire.
- ◆ Across the empire, voters enthusiastically elected candidates to the Chamber of Deputies, in the hopes that the Parliament would cure the ills of the empire. The Parliament elected was to remain in session under the constitution for four years, when a new general election was required.
- ◆ In January 1909, when the Parliament convened under the presidency of Ahmet Rıza, the CUP enjoyed only a slight majority in the Chamber of Deputies and therefore could not dictate policy. Between January and April, the CUP came under criticism from opponents for its political tactics. The CUP delegates forced a vote of no confidence so that Kamil Paşa, perceived as too loyal to the sultan, had to resign as grand vizier on February 13, 1909.
- ◆ The political debates and controversies during the opening months of the new Parliament frightened many conservatives, who staged a counterrevolution in April 1909 that jeopardized and then ended the experiment in constitutional governance.
- ◆ Bureaucrats, officials of the palace, and members of the ulema rallied around slogans of restoring *Şeriat* and calling for the return to power of Sultan Abdül Hamid II.
- ◆ On April 5, 1909, dissidents among the ulema formed a Muslim opposition party. In response, on the evening of April 12–13, 1909, Albanian conscripts of the First Army in the barracks in Taksim Square mutinied in the name of *Şeriat* and Sultan Abdül Hamid II.

The CUP aimed to suppress the insurgencies in Macedonia and to replace an incompetent Sultan Abdül Hamid II.

- ◆ On April 13, 1909, the mutinous soldiers besieged the Parliament and frightened Abdül Hamid II to dismiss the grand vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa, who was widely respected, and to claim the primacy of Şeriat. The news from Constantinople carried by telegraph sparked sectarian violence in provincial capitals, with a massacre of Armenians in Adana.
- ◆ The CUP in Salonica reacted immediately, and General Mahmud Şevket Paşa raised an Army of Deliverance (*Hareket Ordusu*) that occupied Constantinople on April 24, 1909, and defeated the rebels. Just like the revolution of 1908, the counterrevolution of 1909 was confined to the capital and Salonica; most residents of the empire learned of each event in the aftermath.
- ◆ General Mahmud Şevket Paşa was a tough, veteran general with no patience for dissent and took brutal reprisals against the mutineers. army, controlled by the CUP, intervened decisively to impose order to save the empire, but not necessarily the constitution.

THE CUP DICTATORSHIP

- ◆ For the next two years, from 1909 to 1911, the CUP dominated the Parliament indirectly as a shadow government using repressive means that were transmitted to the Ottoman Empire's successor states in southeastern Europe and the Middle East today. The Army of Deliverance had not saved constitutional rule but, rather, imposed the supremacy of the first modern military dictatorship in the Middle East.
- ◆ The officers of the CUP feared that disorder in the capital would signal more nationalist revolt among Christian minorities and invite aggression from the great powers or the Balkan nation-states that looked to Russia.
- ◆ Abdül Hamid II was abdicated on April 27, 1909, in favor of his pliable younger brother Mehmet V, who understood his role as a figurehead for the CUP. Officials in the bureaucracy and palace suspected of

counterrevolutionary inclinations were dismissed. The Parliament continued to convene, but the CUP co-opted, intimidated, or ruined in the courts opposition delegates.

- ◆ In the summer and fall of 1909, the CUP intimidated Parliament into passing a series of laws that gave the army wide powers to suppress armed bands in the Balkans, outlawed political parties and clubs based on national identity, and curtailed the press. Strikes by government workers were outlawed, and unions came under strict surveillance.
- ◆ The CUP-dominated Parliament imposed universal conscription with the intent of Ottomanizing the Christian recruits. The CUP still maintained the facade of a constitution, but it ruled from Salonica through anonymous edicts and manipulated by-elections by disreputable tactics.
- ◆ The CUP was the first modern oppressive dictatorship of the Islamic world, for it was a one-party government with neither consent nor responsibility, and it employed bribery, espionage, intimidation, and even assassination that were much more efficient and deadly than the tactics of Abdül Hamid II.
- ◆ The very repressive actions of the CUP from 1909 to 1911 galvanized diverse opponents to unite in protest and to restore true constitutional government. With the Chamber of Deputies, a number of the CUP deputies succeeded in protest over the repressive measures in the spring of 1911.



Mehmet V
(1844–1918)

- ◆ In November, liberals, radical Westernizing deputies, and even pious conservatives joined to form a coalition, the Liberal Union, under Damat Ferid Paşa. The Liberal Union pledged to elect candidates who would work for free elections, more local autonomy, and the end of repressive measures.
- ◆ In a surprise by-election in Constantinople in December, the candidate of the Liberal Union won, and the CUP in Salonica took the defeat as a vote of no confidence. In January 1912, the Chamber of Deputies forced the dissolution of the Parliament and the calling for a new general election.
- ◆ In February, the press in Constantinople released a memorandum to Sultan Mehmet V penned by Kamil Paşa that savagely condemned the tactics of the CUP. In April, the CUP instead restored to the foulest election tactics and engineered a victory.
- ◆ With an obedient figurehead in Sultan Mehmet V and a commanding majority in the Parliament, the CUP relocated from Salonica to the capital. Grand Vizier Mehmet Said Paşa formed a new CUP cabinet of national salvation, including as minister of war Mahmud Şevket Paşa.
- ◆ But the election was so patently rigged that few believed it to be a mandate, and the CUP was already coming under criticism for losing the war in Libya and failing to handle a crisis in Albania. In suppressing legitimate constitutional dissent, the CUP invited the use of conspiracy and revolution as the alternative.
- ◆ In May and June, disgruntled officers in Rumelia and the capital formed a political action committee, the Savior Officers (*Haldaskar Zabvitan*), and pledged to overthrow both the CUP and the sham Parliament. These officers also demanded the withdrawal of the army from politics and the focus of attention to defending the frontiers.

- ◆ As a crisis mounted in the Balkans in June, the CUP came under criticism; CUP Minister of War Mahmud Şevket Paşa resigned in July to save the cabinet.
- ◆ The Savior Officers mobilized forces in Rumelia with the intention of marching on the capital and issued a manifesto in the press demanding the end of the CUP cabinet.
- ◆ On July 17, Mehmet Said Paşa resigned; the Parliament had given a vote of confidence, but he lacked military forces to oppose the Savior Officers. On the same day, at Bostancı, the sultan and outgoing cabinet agreed to the terms of the Savior Officers.
- ◆ On July 2, Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, as the new grand vizier, formed a new cabinet with Hussein Nazım Paşa as minister of war. Later, the respected Kamil Paşa, for the fourth time, assumed the office of grand vizier on October 29.
- ◆ It is uncertain whether this new cabinet—including respected but conservative ministers—could have brought constitutional rule, but was never given a fair chance.
- ◆ On July 23, the new government of Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa lifted the state of siege issued in 1912. On August 5, the Parliament was dissolved, and new elections were announced. Officers throughout the army were required to take an oath to abstain from politics.
- ◆ The responsibility for the collapse of the Ottoman army in 1913 rested with the CUP's diplomacy and lack of military preparedness, but Kamil Paşa, who took over the cabinet on October 29, received the blame.
- ◆ The CUP returned to what it did best, subversion, and on January 23, 1913, officers of the CUP led by Enver Paşa stormed the cabinet offices, shot the war minister Nazım Paşa, and forced the grand vizier Kamil Paşa to resign at gunpoint.

- ◆ The chance for constitutional rule died on the evening of January 23, 1913, because the CUP leaders who took power established a military dictatorship. The CUP cabinet that took power has often been dubbed a triumvirate—the rule of Enver Paşa, Cemal Paşa, and Talat Paşa—but they shared power with other ministers, and they also answered to the CUP, which held ultimate authority.
- ◆ The events of 1908 to 1913 were not just a record of missed opportunities for constitutional rule but an unintended dress rehearsal for the one-party dictatorships that were to follow in the Ottoman successor states.
- ◆ In many important ways, the CUP was the direct heir to the reforms of Tanzimat. Yet the CUP set as its prime goal the preservation of the integrity and great power status of the Ottoman Empire, so the CUP's policies between 1911 and 1918 determined the fate of this empire.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Did the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 offer the possibility of constitutional rule for the diverse populations of the Ottoman Empire? Why was the CUP able to dominate the state from 1909 to 1912?
2. Did the opposition of either the Liberal Union or the Salvation Officers offer a plausible chance for constitutional rule? Why was the CUP able to reimpose its authority on January 23, 1913?

SUGGESTED READING

Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

War in Libya and the Balkans, 1911–1913

In the Italo-Turkish War, the Ottoman army entered into a strategically hopeless situation. Italy, the least of the six great European powers, committed major expeditionary force and occupied the ports of Libya, but the Italian navy won the war. On the same day that the Italo-Turkish War was concluded, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The First Balkan War ended Ottoman rule in southeastern Europe. The Ottoman army collapsed in two weeks of fighting, and by December 3, 1912, the Bulgarian army was within 25 miles of Constantinople. But the Porte was saved because the victors fell out among themselves over the division of the spoils and fought a Second Balkan War in 1913.

TWO WARS

- ◆ The second Ottoman Parliament, which convened in January 1909, faced serious internal and external threats that led to the demise of constitutional rule and plunged the empire into two disastrous wars: the Italo-Turkish War and the First Balkan War.
- ◆ The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) took quite a different approach to foreign policy and the imperialist interference of great powers than did Abdül Hamid II, who pursued an effective foreign policy of armed neutrality, thereby avoiding entanglements in the rivalries of the great powers.

- ◆ CUP officers who took power after April 1909 saw the international scene quite differently. They were proud unionists who imposed military logic of uniformity in administrative reforms to order Ottoman society to sustain conscription. Given their sense of the military command, they did not tolerate dissent or criticism, and they lacked the adroit diplomatic skill of Abdül Hamid II.
- ◆ In 1908, the Ottoman Parliament faced humiliating diplomatic defeats in the Balkans and rising violence in Macedonia and Albania that might invite intervention by the great powers. The Congress of Berlin in 1878 had redrawn the boundaries in the Balkans to the disadvantage of the Ottoman Empire, because imperial frontiers in Europe were indefensible.
- ◆ Violence in Macedonia had forced officers of the Third Army to employ irregulars and brutal reprisals against terrorists and revolutionaries. Failure of Abdül Hamid II to suppress the ethnic and religious violence in Macedonia was an immediate cause for the mutiny of the officers of the Third Army based at Salonica that resulted in the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.
- ◆ In October 1908, about eight weeks after restoration of constitutional rule had been proclaimed in Constantinople, Austria-Hungary unilaterally and in violation of the Congress of Berlin annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- ◆ The furious Russian government gave way to the Austro-Hungarians only because Germany mobilized for war and backed Vienna.
- ◆ The Ottoman cabinet and Parliament protested blatant Austro-Hungarian violation of the Congress of Berlin, because Bosnia and Herzegovina were still under Ottoman sovereignty and entitled to elect members to the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies.
- ◆ Austria-Hungary promised an indemnity and returned to Ottoman control of the sanjak of Novi Pazar. This strategic borderland

separated Serbia and Montenegro and was bound to provoke a crisis.

- ◆ Prince Ferdinand declared himself king of an independent Bulgaria, and the Greeks in Crete proclaimed union with Greece.
- ◆ King Peter I Karađorđević and the Serbian nationalists shifted their irredentist claims from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Macedonia and therefore confrontation with the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ The so-called Bosnia crisis proved a blow to Ottoman liberals, who championed the ideas of Ahmet Rıza for a decentralized state guaranteeing religious, linguistic, and cultural traditions of the non-Turkish populations. The CUP especially saw autonomy as a subterfuge for annexation of Ottoman territory by Christian neighbors or the great powers.
- ◆ Using the diplomatic setbacks in 1908 and the counterrevolution of 1909 as justifications, the CUP ended true constitutional rule by repressive measures after April 24, 1909. Henceforth, the CUP directed foreign policy through the ministry, and the Parliament was reduced to an administrative role.
- ◆ From 1883 to 1896, Wilhelm Leopold Colmar von der Goltz rebuilt the Ottoman army shattered in the Russo-Turkish War. In 1908, the Ottoman army had been reorganized into seven regional field armies; a preponderance of forces was based in the Balkans and western Anatolia.
- ◆ The Third Army, based in Salonica, defended Macedonia; the Second Army defended Thrace; and the First Army was based in Constantinople. The Ottoman army was woefully inadequate in field artillery, logistics, medical facilities, and communications. After

In 1908, the Ottoman Parliament faced humiliating diplomatic defeats in the Balkans.

1908, strategy and military reform were hamstrung by the politicized appointments to minister of war.

- ◆ Enver Paşa, appointed on January 3, 1914, was the first war minister who could effect change and direct strategy. Budget cuts and arrears in pay after 1896 lowered morale and efficiency.
- ◆ In the eastern six provinces in 1896 and 1897, Hamidian irregular regiments brutally suppressed rebellions. Likewise, in Macedonia, the Ottoman army resorted to irregulars from 1908 to 1912 who were just as notorious for committing massacres.
- ◆ From 1911 to 1913, despite the confidence of CUP officers, the Ottoman army was not ready to fight two successive major wars.



Enver Paşa
(1881–1922)

WAR IN LIBYA

- ◆ The Ottoman government was ill prepared to wage the Italo-Turkish War, even though Italy represented the weakest of the European powers and the prize, Libya, had little economic or strategic value.
- ◆ The two Ottoman provinces of Libya, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, represented the last African possessions and therefore the Porte's boast to rule an empire of three continents. Under the reforms of Tanzimat, the ayans of the cities were co-opted, so both provinces were reintegrated into the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ Between 1909 and 1911, the Italian foreign minister Antonino Paternò Castello, Marquis di San Giuliano, secured the consent of the other European powers that Italy had the right to develop its interests in Libya.
- ◆ For Italy, Libya represented a symbolic acquisition that marked Italy as a great power, especially after the loss of Tunisia to the French in 1881 and the humiliating defeat at Adowa in 1896.
- ◆ For the CUP, Libya carried even more symbolic value, and the war was seen as a test of the ability of the Porte to defend its Muslim Arab subjects. The CUP was inclined to fight rather than negotiate and rejected Italian requests by Italy for concessions in Libya.
- ◆ The Ottoman army had little chance of victory in 1911, but it put up a surprisingly good resistance and forced Italy to raise the initial expedition from 34,000 men to more than 140,000.
- ◆ The Italian navy won the war, sweeping Libyan waters of gunboats, blockading the ports of Yemen, and shelling the harbor of Beirut. The Porte could not defend the long coasts of its empire, and in May 1912, the Italian fleet shifted the naval war to the Aegean.
- ◆ The Italian navy occupied the Dodecanese, including Rhodes, and commenced shelling ports of southwestern Asia Minor. The Ottomans fortified the Dardanelles by laying mines and closed the Straits to all international shipping. The war cost Italy financially, but it undermined the CUP's grip on power between April and July 1912.
- ◆ War Minister Mahmud Şevket Paşa resigned on July 7, 1912; soon thereafter, the rest of the CUP cabinet of Grand Vizier Mehmet Said Paşa resigned. The new cabinet of constitutionalists led by Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa as grand vizier took power on July 22, 1912.
- ◆ The new government had to negotiate a lost war in Libya as well as face a crisis from the Balkan League threatening war over Macedonia. The

constitutionalist government had no choice but to accept defeat and conclude the Treaty of Lausanne on October 18, 1912—the same day Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ In territorial and economic terms, the Ottoman Empire could afford the loss of Libya, but politically the defeat proved costly.
- ◆ Under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, the Porte surrendered to Italy the Dodecanese and the African provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica (constituted as Libya in 1934). The Porte, however, retained nominal authority over Libya, and Italians administered the provinces along the same lines by which the British administered Egypt.
- ◆ The Ottoman army could take pride in its heroic defense. But on October 18, 1912, when the First Balkan War erupted, the Ottoman fleet had been sunk, and the army's best officers were stranded in Libya. Ottoman officers who served in Libya found little in common with Arabic-speaking Bedouins other than their Islamic faith, and many Ottoman officers held the Bedouins in contempt as savage barbarians.
- ◆ The perception of Ottoman defeat evoked mixed reactions among the political classes in the Arab provinces. Many Arabic intellectuals and politicians began to consider an alternative to the Porte, and from June 18 to 24, some of them held the First Arab Congress in Paris.
- ◆ Defeat in Libya, followed by CUP policies enforcing Turkish as the language of government and education, alienated the Arabs.

WAR IN THE BALKANS

- ◆ The Ottoman Empire, contrary to contemporary observers, sustained a sudden and complete defeat in just two months in 1912 by a most improbable alliance, the Balkan League, comprising Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Montenegro.



Ottoman soldiers

- ◆ At issue in the First Balkan War, and the even briefer Second Balkan War, was the partition of the remaining Ottoman provinces of southeastern Europe, foremost Macedonia. Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece competed for Macedonia; each based its claim on legal arguments manufactured from medieval and classical historical precedents.
- ◆ Radical revolutionary organizations appeared, notably the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which had the clandestine support of Sofia, and its task was to prepare Macedonia for incorporation into Bulgaria.
- ◆ Greeks and Serbians responded with their own extremist organizations, and Macedonia was rocked by repeated terrorist acts, ill-conceived revolts, and brutal reprisals by the Ottoman army and irregular formations.

- ◆ The governments of Vienna and Saint Petersburg pressed the Porte to reform and invite an international gendarme to restore order. The so-called Macedonian Question in European diplomatic circles was an ever-changing issue that risked escalation into a major European war. From April 1909, the CUP-dominated government in Constantinople was determined to restore order in Macedonia.
- ◆ The outbreak of the Italo-Turkish War spurred the three rival kingdoms to sink their differences and form a league for the conquest and partition of the Ottoman European provinces.
- ◆ On October 8, 1912, Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece soon followed. There was no pretext of an ultimatum, and the war erupted on the same day when the Porte had concluded the Italo-Turkish War. Within 10 weeks, the Ottoman armies collapsed, and the Bulgarian army was within sight of Constantinople.
- ◆ Within two weeks, the Ottoman Eastern army suffered more than 35,000 casualties (one-third of its force); the fortress city Edirne was besieged, and the Bulgarian army was 25 miles from Constantinople. On December 3, 1912, the Balkan League (except for the Greeks) concluded an armistice.
- ◆ British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey invited to a conference at London representatives of the belligerents and other five great powers. But the negotiations quickly reached an impasse, and on January 23, 1913, news of the CUP coup in Constantinople ended discussion.
- ◆ On February 3, 1913, war resumed between the Balkan League and the Porte. On March 26, 1913, the Bulgarians, with the assistance of Serbian heavy artillery, captured Edirne, but siege ended cooperation between the two allies. On April 15, 1913, the belligerents agreed to a second armistice.

- ◆ On May 30, 1913, the Treaty of London formally ended the war, but the Ottoman representatives had been recalled and therefore were not present. Furthermore, King Ferdinand and his General Staff were planning to attack Serbian armies in the Vardar valley.
- ◆ On June 29 and 30, 1913, the Bulgarian surprise attack was repulsed, and Serbia, Greece, and Rumania declared war. The new Balkan League easily defeated Bulgaria in the Second Balkan War—which spanned the 6-week period between June 29 and August 10, 1913—in one of the shorter wars on record.
- ◆ The war among the allies of the Balkan League and the negotiations at London gave an opportunity for the CUP to seize power, end constitutional rule, and recapture Thrace and Edirne in 1913.
- ◆ The Treaty of Constantinople of 1913 ended the Second Balkan War, but the terms, which revised those of the Treaty of London four months earlier, almost assured the outbreak of yet a third Balkan War.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What accounted for Ottoman defeats in the Italo-Turkish War and the First Balkan War? What were the deficiencies in the Ottoman army? Did the foes of the Ottomans deserve their victories?
2. How did the loss of Rumelia and the provinces of southeastern Europe transform the Ottoman Empire? Did the perceptions of defeat by the CUP and the political classes make another major war inevitable?

SUGGESTED READING

Erickson, *Defeat in Detail*.

McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*.

The Road to World War I

The Ottoman government's decision to enter World War I on November 11, 1914, led to the end of the empire. The Ottoman army, economy, and society were not prepared to wage a modern, total war, even though the Ottoman government and the political classes welcomed war as the agent for national awakening. Recent scholarship, based on newly released Russian and Ottoman archives, has corrected popular opinions about the Ottoman entrance into the war.

NEW RESEARCH

- ◆ New research based on Russian and Ottoman archives has elucidated why the Ottoman Empire entered World War I, dispelling a number of nationalistic myths that the Ottoman Empire (and therefore the Middle East) was forced into war by the machinations of the imperialist Western powers, foremost Great Britain.
- ◆ The most widely cited document explaining Ottoman involvement in World War I is the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which arose from secret negotiations in which Sir Mark Sykes, diplomat and protégé of Lord Kitchener, represented Great Britain and François Georges-Picot represented France.
- ◆ Arab nationalists have long seized on the treaty as the proof of Western imperialism to degrade, plunder, and subvert the Muslim world. These perceptions still persist, but this image of Sykes-Picot as explaining why the Ottoman Empire (and the modern Middle East) was swept up in World War I is wrong.

- ◆ Leon Trotsky deliberately published the secret agreement on November 23, 1917, to inflame Muslim populations against the colonial powers (and the Bolsheviks' class enemies) Great Britain and France; he succeeded far beyond his expectations.
- ◆ What is often overlooked is that the Russian foreign minister Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov was the architect of the agreement, and the agreement should be properly labeled as the Sazonov-Sykes-Picot Agreement.
- ◆ The agreement, one of a number of proposed postwar settlements considered by the Entente Allies during World War I, is hardly proof of motive for entering the war in August 1914. Such reasoning arises from a confusion of results as a prime cause, and it is the same logic behind the thesis of Fritz Fischer, who argued, based on the Treaty of Versailles assigning war guilt to Germany, that German expansionist aims precipitated the conflagration of World War I.
- ◆ In the case of the Fischer thesis, the numerous plans drawn up by Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff from 1916 to 1918 for the conquest and colonization of the East are taken as proof of German aims in 1914.
- ◆ Yet the most recent scholarship has demonstrated that Germany entered the war with appeals of national defense, and neither Helmuth von Moltke the Younger nor Erich von Falkenhayn embraced such aims. Instead, both aimed for a victory over France followed by a negotiated settlement.
- ◆ The blame for turning a Balkan crisis into a major European war rests with Belgrade and Vienna, and particularly Austro-Hungarian chief of staff Franz Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf and foreign minister Count Leopold von Berchtold, who wrote the ultimatum that ensured Serbian rejection and a declaration of war.

- ◆ Among Turks today, the blame for Ottoman entrance into World War I is placed squarely on Enver Paşa, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) minister of war from January 3, 1914, until October 13, 1918. Enver Paşa is criticized for dragging Turkey into the war out of personal ambition and his obsessive philo-German sympathies. Yet the best current research demonstrates that Enver Paşa did not act alone or in violation of the interests of the political classes.
- ◆ The military defeats from 1911 to 1913 did not demoralize the press and political classes of the Ottoman Empire but, rather, led them to express a new belligerent, Turkish nationalism.
- ◆ From 1912 to 1914, Ottoman political writing unanimously called for a national awakening (*hareket-i intibahiye*). These publications, although printed by agencies of the government or private presses censored or sympathetic to the CUP, nevertheless reflected the opinions of the elite classes of Constantinople, which formed the politically active and informed public.
- ◆ Authors blamed the defeats on Sultan Abdül Hamid II, clamored for a German alliance, and redefined the Ottoman citizenship of Tanzimat into a Turkish nationality. These views were widely circulated. Collectively, these writers, journalists, politicians, and activists defined a new Turkish nationality and saw war as the instrument of national recovery.

REVERSING DEFEAT

- ◆ Defeat forced the CUP to reevaluate the Ottoman military and diplomacy, and far from being chastened or demoralized, the Ottoman government instead optimistically launched new initiatives to reverse the defeats of 1911 to 1913.
- ◆ Immediately after taking power in January 1913, the CUP turned to Germany for assistance in reforming the army. On December 14,

1913, Otto Liman von Sanders arrived at Constantinople with a military mission of 41 German officers who were to reorganize the Ottoman army.

- ◆ The new program promoted aggressive, intelligent officers capable of taking the initiative, and this new generation of Turkish-speaking officers were responsible for the Ottoman victories from 1915 to 1917, and in the War of Independence.
- ◆ Simultaneously, the Ottoman government turned to Great Britain to rebuild a modern navy. In 1913 and 1914, Admiral Arthur Henry Limpus headed a British mission to improve the naval dockyards at Constantinople. The British trained the naval officers of the new Ottoman fleet, which would be essential for a new war with Greece.
- ◆ Diplomatically, the CUP had failed to secure the support of any of the six great powers in 1911 to 1913, so the CUP cabinet sought an alliance with either Great Britain or Germany to protect the empire from Russian aggression.
- ◆ In 1913 and 1914, a long-standing alliance with Britain seemed improbable for the CUP cabinet, so the Ottoman government turned to Germany. Given previous military ties with the German army, the Ottoman government as well as the nationalistic press pressed for an alliance with Germany.



General Otto Liman von Sanders
(1855-1929)

- ◆ Enver Paşa, however, appreciated the risks of an alliance with Germany, which was bound to the ancestral Habsburg foe Austria-Hungary by terms of the Triple Alliance of 1882. Berlin, however, dominated Vienna, and Germany never had territorial aspirations to any part of the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ The Russians seized every opportunity to undermine Ottoman-German ties and immediately objected to the German military mission headed by Otto Liman von Sanders, who was commissioned as commander of the Ottoman First Army and the task of fortifying the Dardanelles.
- ◆ Alignment of the Porte with Germany meant a clash with Russia and therefore a possible clash with Great Britain.
- ◆ In 1914, the Ottoman government press and political classes prepared not for a general European war but, rather, for a Third Balkan War against Greece.
- ◆ The Treaty of Constantinople in 1913 awarded to Greece the islands Imbros, Lesbos, and Chios, which were strategic to the defense of the Dardanelles. The CUP insisted on Ottoman sovereignty over these islands and therefore launched the naval program to overwhelm the Greek navy in a future war for control of the North Aegean Sea.
- ◆ By March 1914, through the efforts of Greek Prime Minister Elefthérios Venizélos, the great powers, including Germany, recognized Greek sovereignty over the islands. Enver Paşa, undeterred, tried to negotiate a treaty with Bulgaria that would assure Bulgarian neutrality and free passage of the Ottoman army to invade northern Greece and retake Thessaloniki. The Ottoman army redeployed for a war with Greece, but the Bulgarians refused.
- ◆ In the European capitals, diplomatic circles were alarmed at the outbreak of yet a third Balkan War between Greece and the Ottoman Empire. The arrival of the new Ottoman battleships, due

in late July 1914, was expected to ignite the new war.

- ◆ Then, on June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist, assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie of Hohenberg at Sarajevo. The ensuing July crisis ended in a general European war on August 3, 1914, when Helmuth von Moltke ordered the German army to invade France.
- ◆ The Ottoman Empire inevitably would be swept up into this war, but it was hardly unwillingly dragged into the war by Enver Paşa or innocently forced to defend itself against imperialist Great Britain.

Alignment of the Porte with Germany meant a clash with Russia and therefore a possible clash with Great Britain.

ENTERING INTO WORLD WAR I

- ◆ Between August 2 and November 11, 1914, Enver Paşa, as well as other ministers, did not attempt to preserve neutrality but negotiated for the most favorable terms from Germany in exchange for Ottoman entrance into the war.
- ◆ The CUP cabinet faced a dilemma not of if, but when, to join the Central Powers in return for territorial concessions in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Although Minister of the Navy Cemal Paşa would have preferred a British alliance, even he realized that the general European war would provide the pretext for Russian attack on the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ On July 31, 1914, Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, impounded two Ottoman dreadnoughts before the crews could raise the Ottoman flag and sail for Constantinople. The CUP cabinet was furious, especially Cemal Paşa.



Soldiers in World War I

- ◆ On August 2, 1914, the Ottoman government concluded a secret defensive treaty with Germany against Russia with guarantees about future territorial claims against Bulgaria and Greece. This alliance was a diplomatic success for Enver Paşa, because for the first time, Germany needed the Ottoman Empire, so he wrote the treaty so that the Porte could choose when to intervene.
- ◆ On August 3, 1914, Enver Paşa ordered the mining of the Dardanelles and closed the Straits to all warships; he acted on his own initiative but with the knowledge that the cabinet, Parliament, and press would approve.
- ◆ An unexpected incident pushed the Ottoman government into the war perhaps sooner than it would have wished: the arrival of the German battleship *Goeben* and its accompanying cruiser, the *Breslau*, on August 10, 1914.

- ◆ On August 4, 1914, Admiral Wilhelm Souchon commanded the battleship *Goeben* and the cruiser *Breslau*, which were then approaching Algiers when World War I erupted. Souchon set course for Constantinople and, on August 10, 1914, entered the Dardanelles with Ottoman permission—a violation of neutrality.
- ◆ The German warships were received enthusiastically by the populace of Constantinople and the CUP cabinet. On the next day, Grand Vizier Said Halim Paşa announced the purchase of the two ships. Suddenly, the Ottoman fleet had mastery over the Russian fleet in the Black Sea.
- ◆ On September 9, 1914, the Entente Allies opened negotiations to lure the Porte into alliance, but the CUP instead proclaimed neutrality and opened the Straits to commercial shipping. On September 17, 1914, the Porte announced the closing of the Straits to all shipping, because the German engineer Guido von Usedom had completed the first phase of fortifying the Dardanelles.
- ◆ Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov protested that this was tantamount to an act of war and ordered mobilization of Russian armies in the Caucasus. On October 25, 1914, Wilhelm Souchon, now admiral of the Ottoman fleet, entered the Black Sea ostensibly on maneuvers.
- ◆ Souchon set course for Crimea and, on October 28, 1914, divided the fleet into four squadrons. Souchon, on the *Goeben*, shelled Sevastopol, destroying port facilities and ships early the next morning while the *Breslau* attacked Theodosia.
- ◆ The fleet then retired to Constantinople, where Enver Paşa congratulated Souchon, while Grand Vizier Said Halim Paşa expressed regret on the incident on November 2, 1914, but on the previous day, Russia had declared war on the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ On November 5, 1914, Great Britain and France declared war, and on November 11, 1914, Mehmet V declared war and announced a fatwa

calling for jihad. The Ottoman government, press, and political public entered World War I enthusiastically, but the Ottoman army and navy were ill prepared to meet the challenges of a modern, total war.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the strategic aims of the Ottoman government and the CUP leadership in July 1914? How did the general European crisis offer an opportunity to further these aims?
2. Why did the Ottoman cabinet hesitate to enter into World War I between August 4 and November 11, 1914? Why did the incident of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* lead to war with the Entente Powers?

SUGGESTED READING

Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*.

McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*.

The Empire at Total War, 1914–1916

In 1914, the Ottoman Empire was in no position to wage a modern war against the Russian Empire, possessing an army 10 times the size of the Ottoman army, or against the British Empire, with its Royal Navy and domination of the world's oceans. The Ottoman army, comprising 210,000 men in 12 corps, were deployed for a war against Greece. The Ottoman army lacked the reserves of manpower, industry, finances, and railroad to sustain a modern war of attrition. Yet Enver Paşa ordered two nearly simultaneous offensives—both of which failed.

BEFORE THE WAR

- ◆ By every standard of military and economic power, the Ottoman Empire was ill prepared to wage war against both the British Empire and the Russian Empire in 1914.
- ◆ In November 1914, the Porte ordered its first general mobilization, and the many recruits dutifully and even enthusiastically reported. The Ottoman army comprised 37 divisions organized into 12 corps; the men under arms, active and reservist, totaled 210,000, and perhaps 250,000 when irregular formation recruited among Kurdish and Arab tribesmen are included.

- ◆ This was a considerable achievement for a population of 18 to 20 million, especially in light of losses of men and equipment from 1911 to 1913.
- ◆ From 1913 to 1914, the Ottoman army had rapidly rearmed and reorganized. German officers and technical experts brought by Otto Liman von Sanders were crucial, but the Turkish officers and soldiers were quick studies and improved on tactical doctrines learned from the Germans.
- ◆ For the first time, Christians, primarily Greeks and Armenians, and Arabs were conscripted, and often these conscripts panicked in combat and fled, whereas Muslim Turkish peasants proved excellent infantry.
- ◆ The Ottoman army never suffered the mass desertions that characterized the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914 and 1916. Nearly one-third of the Austro-Hungarian army deserted or surrendered from 1914 to 1918, whereas most Ottoman soldiers were taken prisoner after ferocious resistance.
- ◆ Atatürk's courageous stand at Ari Burnu on April 25, 1915, was decisive in determining the outcome of the Gallipoli campaign, but his courage under fire typified Ottoman officers. Therefore, from 1914 to 1918, contrary to British and Russian assessments, the Ottoman army on the battlefield performed beyond expectation, even given the tendency of Christians and Arabs to break under fire.
- ◆ But the war against the Ottoman Empire was decidedly a secondary front, and both Great Britain and Russia regarded this war as a sideshow to the real conflict in Europe.
- ◆ The quality of the German corps was superior in its organic artillery, engineering companies, and staff. The two principal Ottoman foes, the British and Russians, were just as formidable.

- ◆ It is unclear how Enver Paşa and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) expected to win, but more importantly, they lacked a strategy. Instead, the CUP committed the Porte to land war against Russia, with 10 times the military strength, and a war against the Royal Navy.
- ◆ Just as important was the state of the Ottoman economy against the economies of Germany, Great Britain, and Russia. In 1914, the Ottoman Empire's annual production of coal was 600,000 metric tonnes. In contrast, Germany annually produced 279 million metric tonnes while Great Britain and Russia, respectively, produced 228 and 62.3 million metric tonnes.
- ◆ The CUP promoted a munitions industry around Constantinople and Izmir and increased steel and coal output. The rise of the number of skilled industrial workers and women in the workforce had profound social consequences for the future Turkish Republic, but this industrialization did not affect the war's outcome. In contrast, Russian industrialists expanded production, and some scholars argue that the wartime economy was in high gear when the February revolution broke out in 1917.
- ◆ In railway capacity, the Ottoman Empire was woefully behind all the European belligerents. Throughout the war, Ottoman strategy and logistics were limited by the lack of adequate transportation.
- ◆ The Porte lacked the revenue to fund a modern war, for the annual state income of Great Britain stood at £134.4 million and that of Russia stood at £169 million whereas the Ottoman Empire stood at £26.4 million.
- ◆ In 1914, 80 percent of Ottoman banking was in the hands of German investors, and nearly one-third of the national revenue was paying off the debt. In September and October 1914, Enver Paşa had to bargain

Throughout the war, Ottoman strategy and logistics were limited by the lack of adequate transportation.

hard to secure a German loan of 5 million Turkish pounds in gold and for as much as another 100 million during the course of the war.

- ◆ By mid-1915, the Ottoman government, denied access to international capital markets to float loans, faced a fiscal crisis.

TWO OFFENSIVES

- ◆ Despite these limitations, the Ottoman government opened the war with two offensives: the first against the Russian Caucasus Army based in Tiflis and the second across the Sinai to capture the Suez Canal, the British lifeline to India.
- ◆ Enver Paşa was, in part, pressed by Berlin to launch an offensive, but he opted for two almost-simultaneous offensives also to recover what the Ottoman public regarded as lost provinces.
- ◆ Enver Paşa personally commanded an offensive against the Russian army in the Caucasus that proved a strategic and logistical disaster that ended in the Battle of Sarıkamış, which lasted from December 29, 1914, to January 15, 1915. The Ottoman Third Army collapsed, and in the next spring and summer, the Ottomans and Russians fought a seesaw war across eastern Asia Minor.
- ◆ In anticipation of the Russian advance, Armenian revolutionaries seized the city of Van from April 15 to May 20, 1915, in bloody fighting in which both sides committed atrocities. When the Ottoman army retook the city in August 1915, 50,000 Armenians were reportedly massacred.
- ◆ From November 1914 to August 1915, the fighting in the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia ended in a stalemate with tragic consequences for the Armenians. On April 24, 1915, Enver Paşa signed the fatal order that called for the deportation of the Armenians.



Lord Herbert Kitchener, Secretary of State for War
(1850–1916)

- ◆ The other Ottoman initial offensive against the Suez Canal also ended in defeat and tragic consequences for civilian populations in Syria.

- ◆ Cemal Paşa, who commanded the Ottoman Fourth Army in Syria, feared Allied landings in the Gulf of Alexandretta and an Armenian uprising, so he took draconian measures against suspected traitors and critics alike. Cemal Paşa curbed the press, ordered public hangings in Aleppo and Damascus of convicted traitors, and deported 5,000 families to Aleppo.
- ◆ Above all, the Ottoman defeat at Suez emboldened the British to launch their own offensive to knock the Ottoman Empire by seizing the Dardanelles and putting Constantinople under the guns of the Royal Navy.

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

- ◆ By conducting these two offensives, Enver Paşa left Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) virtually undefended, and the British occupied Basra and closed the Persian Gulf to Ottoman shipping.
- ◆ In March 1915, Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Lord Herbert Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, planned to end the war decisively with an attack on Constantinople. When the Royal Navy failed to force the Dardanelles on March 18, 1915, British and Commonwealth forces landed on Gallipoli to silence the shore batteries, but the assaults stalled and turned into ghastly trench warfare from April 25 to December 20, 1915.
- ◆ The Ottoman defense, directed by Otto Liman von Sanders, was a strategic victory, and Mustafa Kemal, the future Atatürk, emerged as the most successful Ottoman general, to the envy of Enver Paşa, who gained the Ottoman Empire no strategic respite. Nor did the Ottoman repulse of the British attack on Baghdad that led to the encirclement and surrender of the British army under Sir Charles Townshend at Kut on April 29, 1916.

- ◆ By the opening of 1916, the Ottoman Empire was nearing exhaustion. A Russian winter offensive started the new year and turned the war into one of survival for the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the Russian army in the Caucasus that shattered the Third Army, captured Erzurum and Bitlis, and threatened eastern Anatolia and Iraq. The Ottoman Empire was thereafter fighting for its survival.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the military, financial, and industrial abilities of the Ottoman Empire in 1914? Did Enver Paşa, by conducting offensives in the Caucasus and against the Suez Canal in 1914 and 1915, ultimately doom the Ottoman Empire to defeat?
2. Why did the Ottoman victories over the British at Gallipoli and Kut fail to alter the strategic situation by the opening of 1916? Was Ottoman defeat inevitable by the opening of 1916?

SUGGESTED READING

McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*.

Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*.

Ottoman Collapse, 1916–1918

Despite the defensive victories in 1915, the Ottoman Empire was suffering exhaustion from almost five years of continual warfare in 1916. Russian commander Nikolai Nikolayevich Yudenich launched a second Russian winter offensive and, for a second time, overwhelmed the Ottoman Second and Third Armies. Meanwhile, the British repelled a second Ottoman offensive across Sinai. The British backed the Arab Revolt, but the Ottomans easily contained it. The strategic situation dramatically changed with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. In Syria, the Ottoman Yıldırım Army Group suffered a crushing defeat at Megiddo that ended Ottoman rule of the Arab world.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- ◆ From 1916 to 1917, the Ottoman Empire remarkably not only survived the most powerful Russian invasion to date, but also triumphed over its tsarist foe with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution on March 8, 1917.
- ◆ The year 1916 opened with another shattering defeat of the Ottoman Third Army in a Russian winter offensive launched by Chief of Staff Nikolai Nikolayevich Yudenich. On January 7, 1916, Christmas Day on the Orthodox calendar, Yudenich achieved strategic surprise over the Ottoman Third Army under Mahmud Kamil Paşa.

- ◆ The Russians captured, for a second time, Köprüköy in heavy fighting, and the Ottoman army retired to Erzurum, the fortress city that was the gateway to Anatolia. On February 16, 1916, the Russians stormed the supposedly impregnable forts of Erzurum, and the remnants of the Ottoman army were driven back to Erzincan.
- ◆ From Erzurum, in April 1916, Russian armies traveled northwest against the Ottoman Third Army, capturing the ports of Rize and Trabzon, and traveled southeast against the Ottoman Second Army, capturing Muş and Bitlis. Control of the ports and cities gave Yudenich entrances into the Anatolian heartland as well as Mesopotamia.
- ◆ Enver Paşa could not easily reinforce the Third Army. The collapse of the Ottoman Third Army, for a second time, alarmed the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) cabinet and the political classes in Constantinople, who henceforth saw the war as a grim battle for survival.
- ◆ At the close of 1916, Enver Paşa braced for two powerful offensives: a Russian one across Asia Minor and a British invasion across the Sinai.
- ◆ It was at the height of Russian success in 1916 when Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov negotiated with Sir Mark Skyes and François Picot. The secret agreement was signed on May 16, 1916. The terms favored foremost Russia, assigning to Russia control of Constantinople, Armenia, and eastern Asia Minor.
- ◆ The Porte achieved a surprise with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution on March 8, 1917. The expected Russian invasion of Asia Minor never took place.
- ◆ The Russian Provisional Government announced its commitment to the war and democratic reform, but the armies of the Caucasus Front halted operations. The German government bankrolled Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks, who overthrew the Provisional Government on November 7, 1917.



Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) addressing a crowd

- ◆ On December 3, 1917, Lenin announced an armistice on all fronts, and negotiations produced the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918. The Porte received the return of the three provinces (Batum, Ardahan, and Kars) that had been surrendered in 1878.
- ◆ A rump Armenian state centered at Yerevan was accepted, but the Ottomans had free hand to organize a greater Azerbaijan with Derbent and Baku—strategic and economic assets that would offset the sufferings and losses since 1911.
- ◆ In early 1918, the British seemed to be stalled at Megiddo and Baghdad. Victory in the Caucasus promised the means to amass resources to beat off the British intrusion into the Arabic provinces.
- ◆ Enver Paşa shared with Erich Ludendorff the lure of gaining vast territories in Russia in 1918. Each transferred forces from other

theaters to secure these conquests and therefore weakened other fronts. For Ludendorff, the price was the defeat at the Second Battle of the Marne and strategic failure of the great *Kaiserschlacht*. For Enver Paşa, it was the defeat at Megiddo and the end of Ottoman rule over the Arab world.

THE OTTOMAN ARMY IN SYRIA

- ◆ From 1916 to 1917, the Ottoman army in Syria was forced to assume a defense against the British, and the quality of the Ottoman army steadily deteriorated over the course of the fighting, while Great Britain mobilized overwhelming strength in Indian, Australian, New Zealand, and South African forces.
- ◆ In 1916, the Ottoman Fourth Army in Syria faced an ever-worsening strategic situation and growing disaffection among the diverse populations of Syria.
- ◆ In January 1916, Sir Archibald Murray assumed command of the Egyptian Expedition Force in Cairo. Murray advanced British positions east of Sinai.
- ◆ Cemal Paşa ordered his chief engineer, Friedrich Kress von Kressenstein, to organize the logistics for a second offensive as a preemptive strike against the planned British advance into Palestine. The Ottoman Fourth Army waged a war of maneuver in the Sinai desert. But at the Battle of Romani in August 1916, the Ottomans suffered a major defeat and abandoned the Sinai offensive.
- ◆ In two separate assaults at Gaza, Murray could make no progress against the entrenchments. In June 1917, Sir Edmund Allenby arrived in Cairo to replace Murray, and Allenby proved one of the most talented Allied generals in World War I. He broke the strategic deadlock in the Middle East.

- ◆ Meanwhile, from 1916 to 1917, the British command in Cairo also promoted disaffection among the Bedouins in Arabia as a counter to the Ottoman declaration of jihad.
- ◆ From 1915 to 1916, Cemal Paşa, as governor-general of Syria, imposed harsh measures in Syria, for he feared Anglo-French landings at the ports would be welcomed by Arab nationalists.
- ◆ Meanwhile, the British high command in Cairo had long cultivated Hussein ibn Ali al-Hashimi, the sharif and emir of Mecca since 1908. He was the hereditary defender of the Holy Cities in the Hejaz and the hajj. The independent Hussein could evade CUP reforms, and he assumed a circumspect position during the Libyan and Balkan Wars.
- ◆ World War I disrupted the lucrative pilgrimage trade and threatened commerce in the Red Sea, foremost shipments of foodstuffs from Egypt. Hussein thus played a duplicitous double game in inciting the British and Ottomans into a bidding war for his loyalty. Ultimately, dependence on British subsidies and Egyptian foodstuffs tipped the balance in favor of the British.
- ◆ In mid-June 1916, Hussein raised the green banner of the Prophet in revolt and expelled the Ottoman garrison at Mecca.
- ◆ The British hoped that this Arab Revolt would ignite rebellions in the Arab provinces against the CUP and the Ottoman sultan, whom pious Muslims would regard as modernist and the antithesis of *Şeriat*. But nothing of the sort happened, for the revolt was confined to Hejaz and therefore was more of a nuisance than a threat to the Porte.
- ◆ The Ottomans held Medina, the terminus of the railroad from Damascus, and the British lent less-than-generous aid to the Arab Revolt. The British failed to grasp that tribal leaders depended on their position within the Ottoman hierarchy to maintain their standing and patronage among their fellow tribesmen.

- ◆ The Arab Revolt never induced mass desertions of Arab soldiers from the Ottoman army, and the Arab populations in Syria and Iraq were initially indifferent when they exchanged British for Ottoman masters in 1918.
- ◆ In Mesopotamia, after the surrender of Sir Charles Townshend at Kut in 1916, the British opened a new offensive against Baghdad, but it failed to be decisive. Baghdad fell on March 11, 1917. While a drab, provincial town, the city was the seat of the Abbasid caliphate and was therefore a symbolic loss for the Porte.
- ◆ The Ottomans sustained their decisive defeat in Palestine, and not Iraq, because of the inspired generalship of Edmund Allenby, a cavalry officer. In November 1917, Allenby launched a diversionary attack on Gaza while a flanking force captured the wells of Beersheba and turned the Ottoman position.
- ◆ The Ottoman army abandoned Jerusalem on December 9, 1917. Allenby entered Jerusalem on December 11, 1917, at the head of his Indian Muslim soldiers, who kept sectarian violence to a minimum. Enver Paşa sacked Falkenhayn and appointed as commander of Yıldırım Army Group Otto Liman von Sanders, who stabilized the front in northern Palestine and anchored on Megiddo.

The collapse of the Ottoman army came suddenly and unexpectedly in late 1918.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE OTTOMAN ARMY

- ◆ The collapse of the Ottoman army came suddenly and unexpectedly in late 1918.
- ◆ Enver Paşa overruled the concerns of Cemal Paşa about the mounting British threat in Palestine and Iraq and transferred the main weight to the Ottoman army in eastern Anatolia to reclaim lost territories in the Caucasus.

- ◆ The Ottoman army scored its last victory when it captured Baku on September 15, 1918, but this victory was meaningless because in committing Ottoman forces to the Caucasus, Enver Paşa had compromised the other fronts.
- ◆ The sudden collapse of the Salonica Front in September 1918 put Constantinople in immediate danger of occupation by the British army under George Francis Milne.
- ◆ Since autumn 1915, a mixed force of Allied units contained an equally diverse coalition of the German, Bulgarian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman divisions. The German staff of the Eleventh Army under Kuno von Steuben was excellent, but in 1917, the Bulgarian army, and nation, was even less capable of modern warfare than the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ In September 1918, the French-Serbian armies under Louis Franchet d'Espèrey broke through the entrenchments along the heights of Dobro Pole in a superbly coordinated attack with a murderous artillery bombardment and air support. The German Eleventh Army retreated in good order, but Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Ottoman armies disintegrated.
- ◆ Franchet d'Espèrey directed a powerful Anglo-Greek force under George Milne against a virtually undefended Constantinople. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria and his prime minister were granted an armistice and abdicated on October 4, 1918.
- ◆ The Ottoman government was taken by surprise. In less than a week after Allied breakout, Enver Paşa offered his resignation as war minister to Sultan Mehmet VI on October 4, 1918. By mid-October, the CUP cabinet resigned, and a coalition cabinet under

In October 1918, Liman von Sanders resigned and handed the army over to Mustafa Kemal with his congratulations.

the Anglophile naval officer Hüseyin Rauf Orbay formed to make peace.

- ◆ Aboard the British battleship *Agamemnon*, the Ottoman envoys, with Sir Charles Townshend as their intermediary, concluded the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918. Less than two weeks later, the Germans concluded their armistice with the Allies. World War I ended where it started—in the Balkans.
- ◆ The Yıldırım Army Group under Otto Liman von Sanders was decisively defeated at the Battle of Megiddo in September 1918, and the Ottoman army was driven out of Syria, signaling the end of Ottoman rule in the Arabic world.
- ◆ Sir Edmund Allenby massed artillery and air support to break through the weak Ottoman positions, take the Golan Heights, and encircle two of the Ottoman armies (Fourth and Eighth). Allenby enjoyed overwhelming superiority in mounted forces that exploited and pursued.
- ◆ Muatafa Kemal extricated the Seventh Army and eventually retired to Aleppo. He withdrew across the Amanus Mountains into Cilicia (southeastern Asia Minor) when he received news of the Armistice of Mudros.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal, the only Ottoman general who had suffered no defeat, commanded 5,500 men, one of the most effective military forces left. In October 1918, Liman von Sanders resigned and handed the army over to Mustafa Kemal with his congratulations.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal was ordered to disband Yıldırım Army Group, and he returned to Constantinople in November 1918. However, he distrusted British pledges and instructed his veterans to keep their arms and not to turn over stores to the Allies, for he would contest what he knew would follow.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In 1916 and 1917, how effectively did the CUP cabinet, and Enver Paşa, respond to the threats posed by the Russians and British?
2. Was the collapse of the Ottoman Empire inevitable in 1918, or did a combination of unforeseen events lead to Ottoman defeat?

SUGGESTED READING

McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*.

Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*.

Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk

The terms of the Armistice of Mudros presaged the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the Entente Allies, but many among the Ottoman political classes hoped for a more generous treaty under the principle of self-determination championed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson under the Fourteen Points. This was not to be. Neither Sultan Mehmet VI nor the Allies grasped the depth of defiance of the Muslim Turkish population of Anatolia to foreign rule. Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, focused popular outrage into national resistance, and the Ottoman heartland of Anatolia emerged as the nation-state of Turkey, but its destiny was still to be determined.

THE ARMISTICE OF MUDROS

- ◆ The Armistice of Mudros of October 30, 1918, suspended hostilities, but the fate of the Ottoman Empire was still to be determined by the victors and accepted by the defeated.
- ◆ Mehmet VI and his new cabinet, headed by Grand Vizier Ahmet İzzet Paşa, had to implement the terms of the Armistice of Mudros. The Ottoman transitional cabinet under Grand Vizier Ahmet İzzet Paşa lacked skilled diplomats and trusted Sir Charles Townshend to arbitrate fairly.
- ◆ The naval captain Hüseyin Rauf Orbay assumed the role as chief negotiator. Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, Admiral of the Second Squadron of the Grand Fleet, charmed and wore down Rauf Orbay

into accepting an armistice that presaged the partition of the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ Mehmet VI and his cabinet signed on October 30, 1918, and surrendered the Arab provinces and conquests of the Caucasus. Ottoman armies were to withdraw to the northeastern boundaries of 1914 and from the Arab provinces. Save for sufficient forces to maintain order, the Ottoman armies were to be disbanded and arms surrendered.
- ◆ The armistice used classical names—Mesopotamia, Cilicia, Syria, and Palestine—which few Ottomans understood. The notorious seventh clause even allowed any Allied belligerent to occupy a strategic position in interest of enforcing order and the armistice. The armistice did not depose Sultan Mehmet VI, and the Allies did not want to replace the Porte; blame for the war could be placed on the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) ministers who had gone into exile.
- ◆ Sultan Mehmet VI was not content to play the figurehead, and he happily accepted the resignation of Enver Paşa in October 1918. He removed CUP sympathizers in the government and army and appointed Hamidian ministers.
- ◆ On November 27, 1918, Enver, Talat, and Cemal Paşa were indicted in absentia for losing the war, in part to satisfy the Allies. The trials inadvertently divulged documents that pointed to a genocide of Armenians by members of the CUP cabinet in 1915.
- ◆ In December 1918, Sultan Mehmet VI dissolved the Chamber Deputies, and in March 1919, the sultan's son-in-law, Damat Ferid Paşa, assumed the office of grand vizier. The victors set up a Supreme Allied Council, and henceforth the capital was under British supervision.
- ◆ The French and Greek occupations of Antalya and Smyrna, respectively, and the circulation of the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement inflamed public opinion. By early 1919, protesters decried



Mehmet VI
(1861–1926)

Allied actions and called for a fair treaty of self-determination. The Porte could neither control the popular outrage nor direct it, for it was now in the hands of the victors.

- ◆ The British government, the principal belligerent against the Ottoman Empire, was neither generous to the defeated nor to their allies.
- ◆ The Paris Peace Conference settled the Ottoman Empire. On August 10, 1920, 13 nations ended the war with the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Sèvres, which announced the long-awaited partition of the Ottoman Empire. The treaty confirmed Ottoman relinquishing of the Arab provinces, which were divided between Great Britain and France and administered under the League of Nations.
- ◆ The boundaries of the mandates, and even their names, were arbitrary classical ones, with Mesopotamia and Palestine awarded to Great Britain and Syria to France. Arab nationalists were rightly skeptical about any of these mandates ever achieving the self-determination championed by Woodrow Wilson under the Fourteen Points.
- ◆ Many of the terms could not be enforced, but foremost the rump Turkey under the treaty was controlled by the Kemalist National Assembly, which rejected the impossible conditions.

MUSTAFA KEMAL

- ◆ From 1918 to 1920, Turkish anger at Allied demands escalated first to defiance and then to national resistance under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, the hero of Gallipoli.
- ◆ The Allies underestimated the resolve of the Turkish Muslims of Anatolia to resist foreign rule even after the carnage of almost continuous war from 1911 to 1918. The framers of the Paris Peace Conference had assumed a defeated, complacent Turkey.



Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk
(1881–1938)

- ◆ Instead, the rumors of impending partition and the circulation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement by the Bolsheviks confirmed the worst fears of many Turks that Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points were meaningless. In Constantinople, deputies of the Ottoman Parliament and political activists demonstrated and clamored for self-determination and autonomous development under Wilson's Fourteen Points.
- ◆ In eastern Thrace and Anatolia, self-defense associations spontaneously emerged. In part, these armed societies suppressed bands of brigands, deserters, and irregulars who terrorized the countryside, but they formed the nucleus of a national resistance movement under proper leadership.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, who gave the essential direction and organization to Turkish national resistance, was an extraordinary leader. It is difficult still to write a biography of the father of the Turkish Republic, because he is exalted by most Turks as founding their nation, a secular republic, Islamic in faith and yet modern in outlook. At the same time, many conservative Muslims condemn Atatürk for the renunciation of the Ottoman legacy and attack on traditional Islam.
- ◆ Circumstances from 1919 to 1921 forced Mustafa Kemal to relinquish his military uniform for the civilian suit of politician, founder of a nation, and statesman. He proved an adroit politician, as well as a first commander, and he seized the initiative and organized a constitutional opposition to the Allies even before the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres were concluded.
- ◆ Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Paşa formed a cabinet, cracked on the CUP sympathizers, and negotiated with the Allies. Mustafa Kemal was not associated with the CUP leadership. His outstanding military record won him the appointment, from Sultan Mehmet VI, of inspector general of the Ninth Army (previously the Third Army).

Privately, Mustafa Kemal despised the abject surrender of Damat Ferid's government, and he held contempt for Sultan Mehmet VI.

- ◆ On May 19, 1919, Mustafa Kemal landed at Samsun; his instructions were to disband the Ninth Army. Instead, he contacted a local resistance group, the Society for the Defense of the Rights of Eastern Anatolia, and conferred with Hüseyin Rauf Orbay, who had negotiated the Armistice of Mudros, and Refet Bele Paşa, a veteran officer in the Sinai. By telegraph, Mustafa Kemal contacted other generals, especially Kazim Karabekir Paşa at Erzurum.
- ◆ Reports of Greek atrocities enraged opinion in the eastern provinces, and the Greek invasion was viewed as a violation of the Armistice of Mudros. Mustafa Kemal and Kazim Karabekir announced conferences to oppose the invasion and to urge Sultan Mehmet VI to take action. Mustafa Kemal was elected as chairman of the Erzurum Congress of July 23, 1919, at which point he announced the first version of the National Pact (*Milli Misak*).
- ◆ What was a regional self-defense force had constituted itself as a political body. The Parliament in Constantinople issued the National Pact in January 1920. On April 23, 1920, the National Assembly met at Ankara, endorsed the National Pact, and still protested their loyalty to the sultan, who was supposedly held captive by the British.
- ◆ The Allied Supreme Council had played into the hands of the Kemalists—or, more accurately, nationalists—who were henceforth perceived as the only legitimate government.
- ◆ On April 5, 1920, Mehmet VI recalled Damad Ferid as grand vizier, but neither Mehmet VI nor the Allies were able to take military action against the National Assembly in Ankara.

- ◆ On August 10, 1920, the Allies finally issued the Treaty of Sèvres, which called for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. The treaty was a veritable recruitment poster for the Kemalists.
- ◆ Between May 1919 and August 1920, Mustafa Kemal won the constitutional struggle and gained a cause; it now remained for him to win the war.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

- ◆ Mustafa Kemal and the National Assembly at Ankara stood against the Greek invasion of Anatolia, and this little-known war is called by the Turks the War of Independence and by the Greeks the Asia Minor Expedition or the Asia Minor Catastrophe.
- ◆ Elefthérios Venizélos, prime minister of Greece, championed the Great Idea, which envisioned a Greek state spanning both sides of the Aegean with its capital at Constantinople. The Entente Allies promised to Venizélos eastern Thrace, the islands Imbros and Tenedos, and Smyrna (İzmir) as the price for securing Greece's entrance into World War I. The Greek territorial ambitions, however, were based on historical claims and did not reflect the then-current linguistic and ethnic realities.
- ◆ David Lloyd George, British prime minister, favored Greece, whereas France and Italy viewed Greece as a competitor for spheres of influence and economic concessions in Anatolia. Lloyd George won over Clemenceau and Wilson in Paris to support Venizélos's landing of an army of occupation under the seventh clause of the Armistice of Mudros.

Mustafa Kemal and the National Assembly at Ankara stood against the Greek invasion of Anatolia.

- ◆ In July 1920, the Greeks occupied Bursa, the original Ottoman capital, and therefore incited outrage in Ankara. Venizélos alienated many in the British cabinet because the Greek army advanced far beyond the agreed boundaries. Many in the British War Ministry opposed Greek expansion.
- ◆ On August 10, 1920, Sultan Mehmet VI and his cabinet, headed by Damat Ferid, signed the Treaty of Sèvres and therefore fatally compromised themselves. Meanwhile, young King Alexander of Greece died of an infection on October 25, 1920, and Venizélos was defeated in the November general elections.
- ◆ The Greek opposition then invited the exiled Constantine, the pro-German king deposed in 1917 and unacceptable to Allies, to return to Athens. Even Lloyd George disapproved of Constantine, and thereafter the British government withdrew its financial support. The new Greek government under Dimitrios Rallis continued the war but purged many Venizélist officers.
- ◆ From 1920 to 1922, Mustafa Kemal and his associates in Ankara exploited the divisions among their foes and the topography of Anatolia to halt and then drive back the Greek invasion and therefore win legitimacy for the National Assembly.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal and his former field commander Mustafa İsmet, İnönü together planned and won the decisive battles that threw back the Greek offensive against Ankara in 1921 and the Battle of Dumlupınar that won the war.
- ◆ On July 24, 1923, the 13 signatories of the Treaty of Sèvres concluded a new treaty at Lausanne. The present borders of Greece and Turkey were established, and an exchange of populations was mandated, involving the movement of more than 1.25 million people.
- ◆ The government in Ankara, legally recognized as the successor to the Ottoman Empire, regained sovereignty over Izmir, eastern Thrace,

Constantinople, the Straits, and the north Greek islands Imbros and Tenedos. The capitulations and European spheres of influence were abolished; the Ottoman debts were cancelled.

- ◆ The Kemalists had won a remarkable victory, but the fighting and the Treaty of Lausanne marked the end of the Ottoman order. Mustafa Kemal had won the constitutional struggle and the war, and now he had to win a peace.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Did defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I have to mean the end of the sultan-caliph? How did the terms imposed by the Allies galvanize national resistance among Turks?
2. How important were the congresses of Erzurum and of Sivas in rallying national opinion to Mustafa Kemal? How did Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, contribute to the victory over the Greeks from 1919 to 1922?

SUGGESTED READING

Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*.

Mango, *Atatürk*.

Casualties of War and Ethnic Cleansing

On April 24, 1915, Minister of War Enver Paşa signed an order of deportation of the Armenian populations inhabiting the six eastern provinces of Anatolia. The Armenians were sent on a death march to a desolate new home in northern Syria, and tens of thousands died from the brutality of the guards and the horrendous conditions. These actions by the Porte have been widely condemned as genocide, but the Ottoman government had good cause to suspect that the Armenians would aid and welcome Russian armies, and both Armenians and Greeks committed their fair share of massacres.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

- ◆ World War I destroyed not just Ottoman political power, but the very system of ruling a multinational empire through religious communities of the millet so that the destruction of the Armenian community in 1915 and 1916 has been seen as the first in a series of ethnic cleansings or genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries.
- ◆ On April 24, 1915, Enver Paşa signed an order of deportation of Armenians from the six eastern provinces on recommendation of the Interior Ministry, headed by Talat Paşa. This order has been considered the start of the Armenian genocide.

- ◆ The order stipulated that Armenians in the war zones were to be deported immediately and relocated to northern Syria. The order included many exempt groups, such as the elderly, families of Armenians serving in the Ottoman labor battalions, and Protestant and Catholic converts.
- ◆ Most Christians—Greeks, Armenians, and Syrians—conscripted into combat regiments had already been disarmed and put in labor battalions under strict control and short rations. The official deportation was thus a wartime security measure, and a number of Muslim families in the war zone were also evacuated.
- ◆ But Ottoman officials and officers, and Kurdish leaders of irregulars, often ignored these exemptions, and the deported had to gather hastily what little they could carry on a death march to an arid region of Syria that was of no strategic value to anyone.
- ◆ The conditions of the deported Armenians were horrifying, and tens of thousands died of maltreatment. When the deportees finally reached the Ottoman railway in Cilicia, they were denied passage. Rapes, beatings, and killings abounded, primarily committed by Kurdish irregulars, but also by Ottoman soldiers.
- ◆ On March 15, 1916, Talat Paşa issued a formal end of the deportations, but as he privately admitted, there were very few Armenians left in the six eastern provinces, and the government retained the right to arrest any suspected traitors.
- ◆ The abuses in implementing the order of deportation of Armenian civilians were likely no surprise to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) cabinet, the Ottoman political classes, or many of the Turkish Muslims of Anatolia.
- ◆ The first reason for classifying the massacre of the Armenians in 1915 and 1916 as a genocide is the number of deaths of Armenians of all ages and of both sexes. Perhaps at least 675,000 Armenians

were killed, and more than 1 million fled, perhaps 80 percent of the Armenian community. The Ottoman government also took strong measures against the Rum, the Greek Orthodox populations.

- ◆ The result—if not the intent—of this ethnic cleansing attained a genocidal level, because the community could never recover from such losses.
- ◆ The Ottoman government also deported Greeks and Arabs in the name of security, and the Syrian (or Assyrian) Christians suffered massacres and deportations on the same order of magnitude as the Armenians.
- ◆ The second reason why the massacre of the Armenians in 1915 and 1916 constituted a genocide is the issue of intent on the part of the Ottoman government. The Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined the word “genocide” based on the atrocities suffered by Armenians and Syrian Christians (often called Assyrians) from 1915 to 1921.



Armenian Genocide Monument

- ◆ When the Allies occupied Constantinople under the Armistice of Mudros, they pressed Sultan Mehmet VI to conduct trials against the CUP leadership for war crimes. On November 11, 1918, Tevfik Paşa took charge of the cabinet as grand vizier and initiated proceedings against seven leading CUP leaders for war crimes—notably Enver Paşa, Cemal Paşa, and Talat Paşa, who had all fled the country.
- ◆ The trials did produce private correspondence and telegraphs of Talat Paşa that suggest intent, but the authenticity and circumstances of this evidence are questionable. The CUP never issued an ideological manifesto based on genocide of the Armenians. In 1922, the Kemalist government ended the trials and closed the matter of the Armenians.

REASONS FOR THE DEPORTATION OF ARMENIANS

- ◆ In 1915 and 1916, the Ottoman government ordered the deportation of the Armenians for reasons based on military necessity and a new sense of belligerent nationalism.
- ◆ On April 24, 1915, when Enver Paşa signed the order of deportation, he faced a critical military situation in the Dardanelles and on the Caucasus Front. On the evening of April 24–25, 1915, the British commenced their landings on Gallipoli, and the Porte expected a Russian naval assault on the Bosphorus.
- ◆ Nikolai Nikolayevich Yudenich had shattered the Third Ottoman Army at the Battle of Sarıkamış in January 1915, and a Russian spring offensive was expected against both Van and Erzurum.
- ◆ Armenian revolutionary partisans were sabotaging Ottoman railways and destroying telegraphs and supply dumps. Yet military considerations alone do not explain the order of deportation, nor does a policy of retribution for Armenian acts of sabotage or terrorism.

- ◆ The CUP leadership was comprised of men who were staunch unionists whose views were shaped by the defeats since 1878 and the belligerent nationalism that pervaded the political literature since 1909.

- ◆ The defeats in the Russo-Turkish War drove more than 500,000 Muslim refugees into the capital or Asia Minor.

This proved a traumatic experience for the Ottoman political classes, and many of these refugees or their children became the soldiers and bureaucrats of the Young Turks and the CUP.

- ◆ From 1912 to 1913, at least another 400,000 Balkan Muslims fled to the capital or Asia Minor, and they swelled the ranks of these *muhacirler*.

- ◆ More than one-third of the CUP leadership came from displaced Muslim families in the Balkans, and they were convinced unionists and Turkish nationalists. These displaced Ottomans found a new Turkish, Anatolian identity, and they were most active in carrying out the destruction of the Armenian community.

- ◆ Increasing, Ottoman political literature stressed Anatolia as the true Turkish heartland once Rumelia was lost. Nationalist writer Naci İsmail, using the pseudonym Habil Adem, defined Anatolia as the new Turkish heartland and defined a Turkish citizenship as based on race (irk) or nationality (millet). In effect, he expressed the ideology of a displaced elite who were determined to defend their new adopted homeland in Anatolia.

- ◆ These same views were shared by the Kemalists, who proclaimed in the National Pact national resistance against any effort by Greeks or Armenians to claim any part of Anatolia.

On the evening of April 24–25, 1915, the British commenced their landings on Gallipoli.

- ◆ In 1922, Mustafa Kemal ended the tribunal not because of its judicial unfairness, but because he and his Kemalists considered the issues unimportant.
- ◆ The Kemalists, who included many officials and officers who had participated in the destruction of the Armenian community, now ruled Anatolia, and they did so in tandem with local elites, landlords, and Kurdish tribal leaders who had profited from the deportations.
- ◆ This toxic mix of military necessity and defensively belligerent nationalism was behind the order signed by Enver Paşa on April 24, 1915. The actions taken in 1915 were aimed not so much at the relocation of Armenians to new homes, but removal of the Armenians altogether.

In 1895 and 1896, violence erupted against Armenians and Syrian Christians in the eastern provinces.

THE PORTE AND ITS ARMENIAN SUBJECTS

- ◆ The relations between the Porte and its Armenian subjects since the second half of the 19th century resulted in each side seeing the other as a mortal enemy.
- ◆ Since 1878, growing ethnic and sectarian violence in the regions of the Caucasus was promoted by the tsarist government and the Porte to further each's imperial aims to control the strategic region.
- ◆ The great powers, in both the Treaty of San Stefano and Congress of Berlin in 1878, stipulated that the Porte had to protect the lives and property living in the six eastern provinces of Asia Minor (Van, Erzurum, Mamuretülaziz, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, and Sivas).
- ◆ The Porte had complicated the already-diverse ethnic composition of these provinces by settling Kurds as military colonists and

compelling Turkmen to exchange their nomadic lives for a sedentary one as agriculturalists since the 16th century. Adoption of the Turkish language, and then of Islam, also added to the size of the Muslim populations in these provinces.

- ◆ Prior to the late 19th century, none of the ethnic or religious groups formed a conscious nation, and most people identified by religion, so they were classified under the Ottoman millet.
- ◆ Since 1878, many Armenians lived under Russian rule, and the tsarist government encouraged violence between Armenians and Kurds in a complicated web of diplomatic maneuvers in which arms and money flowed freely across the border to all factions.
- ◆ In 1895 and 1896, violence erupted against Armenians and Syrian Christians in the eastern provinces, but the reasons and conditions varied from district to district. None of the fighting amounted to a coherent struggle for statehood.
- ◆ The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 raised hopes among many educated and politically active Armenians when the Parliament was reconvened, and once again an official policy of Ottoman citizenship without regard to faith was proclaimed. Armenians were divided on the promises of the Young Turks in 1908.
- ◆ The so-called counterrevolution in Constantinople in 1909 brought to power the CUP, with its strong unionist platform and reforms to centralize administration, government, and education. Thereafter, evermore Armenians were alienated from the CUP-dominated government in Constantinople, with its rhetoric of a Turkish Ottoman identity.
- ◆ For the Armenians, the First and Second Balkan Wars not only brought a new wave of Muslim Balkans into Anatolia, but Armenians henceforth were the largest Christian minority within the empire without a national homeland.

- ◆ At the outbreak of World War I, N. N. Yudenich, commander of the Russian Caucasus Front, made use of Armenian partisans and spies, and he recruited Armenian volunteers.
- ◆ When the Third Ottoman Army collapsed at the Battle of Sarıkamış in January 1915, Armenians welcomed Russian soldiers as liberators. On April 15, 1915, in anticipation of the arrival of the Russian army, 3,000 members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation rebelled in Van and called on Russian assistance.
- ◆ Elements of the Third Army under Cevdet Paşa held the citadel, and in the course of the fighting, most of the city was destroyed. In Van and the surrounding villages, Armenians massacred Muslims and held the city until Russian forces arrived in May 1915.
- ◆ On August 4, 1915, the Ottoman Third Army reoccupied the ruined city of Van and in revenge massacred reputedly 50,000 Armenians. The city was destroyed and deserted.
- ◆ In 1915, the Armenians were fatally compromised in the eyes of not only the CUP government, but of the Turkish Muslims of Anatolia. Many Muslims have henceforth pointed to Armenian massacres of Muslims, especially in the fighting from 1918 to 1921, and most shared the opinion that the Armenians brought the destruction of themselves by supporting the Russian forces.
- ◆ Not only the Republic of Turkey, but all the successor states of the Ottoman Empire are heirs to the ethnic and religious violence that overturned the classic Ottoman system of ruling through the millet.
- ◆ For nearly four centuries, the Ottoman sultan had ruled over his diverse subjects with a firm hand, but the various communities had their rights and knew their roles within the traditional hierarchy. Nationalism ended this order and sparked evermore violent struggles to claim and defend a homeland.

- ◆ The Treaty of Lausanne of July 1923, although setting a dangerous legal precedent, was the most humanitarian way to end the violence in Anatolia. The displacement of 1.25 million Christians and Muslims, now classified as Greeks and Turks, ended future ethnic wars.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Did the Ottoman government intend the order of deportation of the Armenians to result in an ethnic cleansing or genocide? How should the massacres of the Armenians be classified?
2. Given the perceptions and fears of Ottoman Turks and Armenians, were the tragic events of 1915 and 1916 inevitable? What was the long-term significance of these events?

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Akçam, *A Shameful Act*.

Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*.

Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*.

The Emergence of the Turkish Republic

The fall of the House of Osman, and its replacement by a secular Turkish Republic in 1923, was an unexpected, decisive event in the making of the modern Middle East. The emergence of the Turkish Republic owed much to the genius of Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, who achieved political domination and ruled Turkey through his People's Party. He initiated sweeping social, educational, and economic reforms that intellectually and culturally reoriented Turkey away from its Ottoman past to western Europe and transformed Muslim peasants of Anatolia into modern Turks. Atatürk forged institutions so that this new state and society would survive and prosper after his death.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

- ◆ The National Assembly at Ankara and its army that defeated the Greeks in 1922 still professed loyalty to the sultan Mehmet VI, and their victory by no means determined the end of the House of Osman in favor of a Turkish Republic.
- ◆ The emergence of the Turkish Republic has long been hailed as a unique and even miraculous achievement by Mustafa Kemal, voted the name Atatürk ("Father Turk") by the Parliament in 1934.
- ◆ It is easy to assume that the death of the "sick man of Europe" was long overdue in 1923 and that the Turkish Republic was ready and waiting to emerge out of the Ottoman Empire.

- ◆ Such a view has been advanced by Kemalist historians writing since 1926 who emphasized the republic's break with the Ottoman past. These historians, with some justification, have argued that the Turkish Republic is the overdue culmination of earlier constitutional rule.
- ◆ Twice, in 1876 and 1908, the Ottoman Parliament promised reform that might have led to a constitutional monarchy with a liberal definition of citizens and tolerance of local institutions. In each case, war, or counterrevolution followed by war, ended constitutional rule and therefore the fulfilment of the Turkish nation.
- ◆ In contrast, war from 1919 to 1922 enabled the emergence of the Turkish Republic as a modern nation-state on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ The Ottoman Empire, just like its rival Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, was yet another corrupt and decrepit autocracy destroyed by World War I in favor of the modern nation-state based on the principles of the French Revolution.
- ◆ This perspective is now under review, and it is clear that many of the reforms enacted by the Kemalists owed much to earlier reforms of Tanzimat, Abdül Hamid II, and the Young Turks. The Turkish Republic in 1923 also possessed the imperial capital of Constantinople, officially renamed Istanbul in 1928, and most of the imperial bureaucracy and army. In these ways, these Ottoman institutions ensured the success of both Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish Republic.
- ◆ The political revolution that ended the rule of the House of Osman in favor of an avowedly secular government was hardly inevitable, and Mustafa Kemal pulled off an unexpected success in founding a republic with the institutions so that it survived his death.
- ◆ On August 10, 1920, when Sultan Mehmet VI and his cabinet, headed by Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Paşa, signed the Treaty of Sèvres, the

National Assembly in Ankara rejected the treaty but not the sultan. The nationalists at both the congresses of Erzurum and of Sivas did not repudiate to the sultan, and few representatives even voiced the option of a republic. The National Pact was a conservative document in most of its content.

- ◆ In 1923, Sultan Mehmet VI, and the National Assembly at Ankara, ratified the Treaty of Lausanne, which ended the war with Greece, the Allied occupation of Constantinople and the Straits, and the hated capitulations.
- ◆ During the negotiations, many Turkish nationalists, including Mustafa Kemal, regarded the territorial borders as those at the time of the Armistice of Mudros of 1918. Under these terms, the Turkish nationalists had plausible claims to Aleppo and Mosul. They had already withdrawn from the conquests in the Caucasus in 1918 and settled the northeastern frontier with the Soviet Union by the Treaty of Moscow in 1921.
- ◆ Many prominent nationalists were reluctant to confirm the loss of the Arab provinces, but the Kemalist army was in no condition to contest the British and French occupation of these lands as mandates under the League of Nations.
- ◆ The convention mandating the exchange of populations signed in 1923 and was appended to the treaty. The treaty thus defined the citizens and the borders of a rump Ottoman Empire, which turned out to be the same as those of the Turkish Republic.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal and the nationalists pragmatically accepted the loss of the Arab provinces and therefore modified their unionist views. At Lausanne, the Kemalists overturned the harsh conditions and partition of Anatolia and emerged with the aims of the National Pact achieved.

The majority of Kemalists in Ankara were still loyal to the Ottoman sultanate and caliphate even though they disliked Mehmet VI.

- ◆ The Ottoman Empire alone of the Central Powers ended Allied occupation and regained control of its political destiny. But this success came with the price of ceding the Arab provinces and any hopes of admission into the club of great powers—an aim of Ottoman reformers since Tanzimat.
- ◆ The Arab provinces passed to under British or French rule as colonies euphemistically called mandates of the League of Nations. Arab nationalists confused the partition of the Ottoman Empire as a cause rather than a result of World War I, but they correctly judge that with victory in 1918, the British and French intended to rule the Arabs through mandates and client kings.
- ◆ Mehmet VI could hardly claim credit for the victory over the Greeks or the success at Lausanne so that his abdication was inevitable, but that's not so with the end of the House of Osman.
- ◆ The majority of Kemalists in Ankara were still loyal to the Ottoman sultanate and caliphate even though they disliked Mehmet VI. These included some of most nationalist leaders, all of whom had been members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Only İsmet İnönü, Mustafa Kemal's loyal field commander, backed the radical reforms, and he prospered to be elected the second president of the Turkish Republic.
- ◆ In the Chamber of Deputies, many, especially members of the ulema, opposed the very idea of a republic. Parliament was still operating under the constitution of 1876.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal cleverly built support among the deputies to separate the issue of continuing the sultanate and caliphate. After more than two weeks of heated debate, the National Assembly voted to depose Mehmet VI and abolish the office of caliphate. Mehmet VI, however, went into self-imposed exile, and Mehmet's cousin Abdül Mecit II was proclaimed caliph.

- ◆ In December 1922, Mustafa Kemal formed a new People's Party (Halk Fırkası). Mustafa Kemal's People's Party was, in its membership and ideology, the successor to the CUP and the Young Turks.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal dominated politics as both chairman of the People's Party and president of the Parliament in a much more effective combination of party and state offices than was ever possessed by Enver Paşa. In effect, Mustafa Kemal had revived the single-party state, and he was able to stifle opposition to dismantling the Ottoman religious hierarchy.
- ◆ In part, Mustafa Kemal acted to remove a religious authority that could challenge his personal power and reforms, but he also acted of conviction that Islamic tradition was an obstacle to Turkey's joining the "civilized world," by which Young Turks since 1906 meant European civilization. Henceforth, Turkey was put on the path of joining Europe and distancing itself from the Middle East.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal was transformed into the statesman and founder of Turkey, Atatürk, by vote of the Parliament in 1934. Mustafa Kemal earned his name because, once secure in power, he won his greatest victory in forging a new Turkish nation.

THE TRANSFORMATION INTO THE MODERN TURKISH REPUBLIC

- ◆ Mustafa Kemal and the republic's Parliament in 1924 faced the daunting task of transforming the ruined imperial heartland of Anatolia into the Turkish Republic.
- ◆ In 1925, the population of Turkey is estimated at 13.5 million, or 20 percent less than in 1914. The population of Anatolia was changed; more than one-third were newly settled Muslims from the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Arabic provinces displaced by the war. The newcomers occupied the homes and lands of the former Christian

population, and agriculture fell as the newcomers had to learn the soil, climate, and seasons of their new land.

- ◆ By 1916, conscription and the massacre of Armenians reduced the labor force on the countryside, and manufacturing and commerce had virtually collapsed because of the exodus of Greeks and Armenians. The economic reforms of the Kemalists from 1925 to 1940 transformed the countryside, and the population steadily recovered to 17.8 million by 1940.
- ◆ The primacy of Anatolia was publicized by the transformation of the sleepy town of Ankara into the capital, and second largest city, of Turkey—a repudiation of the Ottoman legacy. Across Anatolia, cities were rebuilt, and even in villages and scattered farmsteads, electricity and modern centers steadily arrived.
- ◆ Simultaneously, Mustafa Kemal exploited changes wrought in late Ottoman society by World War I to promote a new Turkish identity. World War I made it possible to turn Ottoman peasant conscripts into citizens of a Turkish Republic. Conscription, just as in tsarist Russia, socialized peasant soldiers who saw a wider world and acquired a Turkish political identity by their service in defense of the homeland.
- ◆ The CUP from 1915 mobilized Muslim civilian laborers in transportation, munitions and supply industries, and medical services. For the first time in major cities, Muslim women entered the labor force, gaining emancipation, which was confirmed by the republic's constitution in 1923.
- ◆ Therefore, the Kemalists were not conducting a social revolution from above, for they reflected the aspirations and demands of a sizeable, and most politically active, portion of the electorate.

Mustafa Kemal dominated politics as both chairman of the People's Party and president of the Parliament.

- ◆ The loss of the Arab provinces freed the government in Ankara from administering distant provinces, so it could concentrate its limited resources on Turkey.
- ◆ The Kemalists had gained legitimacy by victory in battle, and henceforth, the Turkish army and gendarmerie supported the republic and, by 1938, came to regard itself as the guardian of the secular state. Without this large national army, Mustafa Kemal could never have implemented his educational, economic, and social reforms.
- ◆ Mustafa Kemal, even though he owed much to his predecessors, carried out sweeping reforms that were truly revolutionary.
- ◆ On November 1, 1928, the Turkish Parliament legislated the adoption of the Roman script for the Turkish language and outlawed the use of the Arabic script. Earlier laws had adopted the international Arabic numerals and the Gregorian calendar. The changes in writing, counting, and reckoning of time severed the Turkish citizens from their Ottoman past.
- ◆ By adopting the Roman script, Arabic and the Koran were removed from immediate reach for many Turks, and Islam, associated with the new Turkish nationalism, was promoted in the state school system. Compulsory education was for all children, boys and girls, who were required to wear modern school uniforms that removed class and ethnic distinctions. The educational reforms thus transformed Muslim peasants into Turks.
- ◆ Simultaneously, Turks had to assume European-style last names, and the traditional Muslim garb was outlawed in favor of European dress for men and women. Polygamy and the veiling of women were outlawed, and legally women received equal political status under a secular civil code.

- ◆ The reordering of Turkish society required a reassessment of the Ottoman past, and to this day, Turks are wrestling with how they should understand their Ottoman legacy.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Was Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, the destroyer of the Ottoman Empire? Was the creation of a secular Turkish Republic inevitable after the War of Independence?
2. What factors contributed to the transformation of Ottoman Anatolia into modern Turkey? How important were legal, social, and educational reforms in shaping a new national identity? How much did this Turkish identity owe to its Ottoman past?

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Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*.

Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*.

Nation-States, Islam, and the Ottoman Legacy

The Balkan nation-states, the Arab nations, and the Turkish Republic owe so much to the institutions and civilization of the Ottoman Empire. Until recently, Orthodox Christians and Arabs have stressed earlier legacies, so they have minimized or overlooked the Ottoman impact. The Kemalists and pious Turks have both transformed Ottoman civilization into a national Turkish one. Ottoman civilization, however, represented the climax, and even renaissance, of classical Islam. Its achievements, and failures, can only be appreciated on its own terms—and its remarkable success in comparison to the other traditional Islamic empires of Safavid Iran and Mughal India and to its Christian rivals in the West.

THE LEGACY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

- ◆ The legacy of the Ottoman Empire still influences the Middle East today, and it will most likely determine the future of the peoples of the Middle East. Sectarian divisions in both the Balkans and Middle East today are part of the Ottoman legacy that will long influence the world.
- ◆ Under the system of the millet, the Porte had imposed a sensible, livable order for the diverse communities within the Ottoman Empire. The resulting order and prosperity allowed for widespread immigration across administrative boundaries of sanjak (a fiscal unit

rather than an internal boundary) that created the ethnic and religious diversity of the Balkans and Middle East.

- ◆ The Ottoman Empire was a Muslim state and society based on *Şeriat*. But the Porte conducted no forced mass conversions, and the sultan respected the hierarchy and religious institutions of his Christian and Jewish subjects.
- ◆ Between the mid-14th and late 18th centuries, neither the sundry Holy Leagues preached by the Pope or the Habsburg monarchy of Vienna represented a serious option for the Orthodox populations in the Balkans. The Porte only faced the danger of widespread revolts among its Orthodox population in the wake of the victories of Catherine the Great from 1768 to 1774 and from 1787 to 1792.
- ◆ Henceforth, tsarist Russia, the cultural heir of Byzantium, aimed to retake and restore a Christian Constantinople and therefore won the prayers and hopes of the Orthodox populations.
- ◆ The advent of nationalism led to the collapse of the system of the millet in the 19th century, and in its place arose the belligerent nationalism and ethnic cleansing of the 20th and 21st centuries. The consequences are evident in the sectarian and ethnic violence in Yugoslavia since 1991, in Iraq since 2003, and in Syria since 2011.
- ◆ The current sectarian division between Sunni and Shi'a in the Middle East is yet another part of the Ottoman legacy. The Iranian campaigns of Selim I and Suleiman the Magnificent against Safavid Iran sharpened the rivalry between Sunni and Shi'a Islam.
- ◆ For the Porte, Shi'ite Iran became the foe to humble or to topple, and in return, the Safavid shah encouraged the Shi'ite rebels in the Ottoman Empire and aimed to recover the sacred cities of Najaf and Karbala. This religious divide, the legacy of the Ottoman-Safavid wars, dictates politics and religious loyalties of the Middle East of today.

- ◆ The current clash within the Islamic Middle East is a struggle of what vision of Islam will prevail, so in some ways, the Islamic world must on its own learn the lessons of the Thirty Years' War.
- ◆ The abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924 has posed a crisis of legitimate authority within the Sunni Islamic world that has contributed to the political and religious instability of the Ottoman successor states in the Middle East.



Ottoman Empire Emblem

- ◆ Since 1924, no caliph can issue a firman, and therefore legitimacy, on Muslim rulers, and the regimes that have followed with the end of colonial rule have faced a lack of legitimacy once in the power of the Turkish caliph.
- ◆ The British, French, and Italians turned over power to monarchs, often claiming descent from the Prophet, and they have ruled in the guise of constitutional kings to win Western aid or approval.
- ◆ The Alaouite sultans of Morocco, the Hashemite kings of Jordan, the House of Saud, and the Gulf emirs have retained power, drawing their strength from traditional tribal ties, and are content to rule regional states.
- ◆ In Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Libya, army officers, trained in Western technology, followed the example of Atatürk, so they have seized power ostensibly to create a modern nation-state.
- ◆ These dictators have promoted modernization, but they have cracked down on dissent, especially Muslim fundamentalists, and instituted repressive regimes and single-party rule in the tradition of the Committee of Union and Progress. These dictators lack any religious legitimacy.
- ◆ Sunni Muslims disagree over the restoration of the caliphate. For many, the Turkish caliph was an aberration; therefore, many want the descendants of the House of Osman to return as caliphs. Sunni fundamentalists want the authority of an inspired imam who has the merit—piety and successful jihad—to assume the caliphate.
- ◆ In June 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed the caliphate of the Islamic State under the name Ibrahim, and he has proclaimed jihad, very much in the tradition of opponents of the Porte.
- ◆ Sunni fundamentalists—ISIS, or Danesh, the Taliban, and Wahhabis—share a common vision of restoring Islam with the

majesty or the Abbasid caliphate but with the simple purity of the original Muslim community—an idealized and contradictory vision.

- ◆ Finally, the current turmoil in the Middle East has resulted from the failure of the victors of World War I to replace the Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ Failure of the Treaty of Versailles and its associated treaties revealed that Great Britain and France could defeat the Ottoman Empire, but they could not rule the Arab provinces nearly as effectively as the Porte.
- ◆ The victor at Versailles created mandates with the names of Roman provinces—Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia—created by joining Ottoman *sancaklar* into nation-states. These *sancaklar* were convenient fiscal divisions grouped around major cities, and they were not, and were never intended to be, linguistic or ethnic building blocks for a nation-state.
- ◆ In the period between the World Wars, Great Britain and France were unwilling to play the same imperial role in the Middle East as they had done in the 19th century. World War II shattered the European colonial powers, which divested themselves of overseas colonial empires after.
- ◆ The brief rule of the British and French under the mandates bred a much deeper resentment among Arab nationalists than they had ever felt against the Ottoman Empire. The British support of a Jewish homeland from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 incensed Arab nationalists even further.
- ◆ Yet the Arab successor states of the Ottoman Empire emerged as artificial creations, for the architects of the Paris Peace Conference assembled these mandates out of Ottoman *sancaklar* in the interests of the great powers. The Arab states obtained independence when the

World War II shattered the European colonial powers, which divested themselves of overseas colonial empires after.

colonial powers decided to withdraw, and they never blamed their ills on the machinations of the Western powers.

- ◆ In contrast, the Kemalists reinvented Anadolu as the Turkish Republic forged in a war of independence against the Greeks, proxies of Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain. The Turkish nationalists thus could recast the Ottoman political and military legacy as part of the national narrative to a nation-state.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATION-STATES

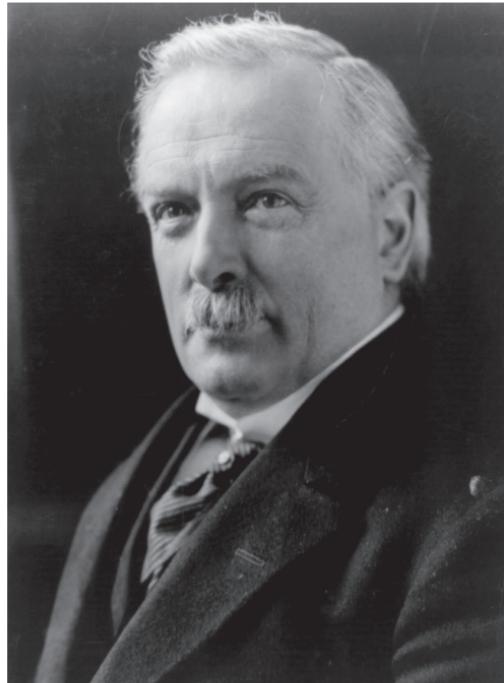
- ◆ Each of the successor states to the Ottoman Empire—the nation-states in the Balkans, the Turkish Republic, and the Arab states—has its own perceptions of its Ottoman legacy and what it has learned from this history.
- ◆ The Balkan nation-states, with the exception of Albania, have usually viewed Ottoman rule as an occupation that had retarded or suppressed their independence, faith, and culture.
- ◆ The Arab states have a more ambiguous perception of their Ottoman legacy, and many praise certain cultural achievements. Since the early 19th century, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent has gained a place among the great rulers and heroes of Sunni Islam.
- ◆ The Turkish Republic has embraced a reinvented Ottoman history as part of a national history of the Turkish people in Anatolia today so that Turks of all political parties claim as their heritage the achievements of Ottoman civilization.

POLITICAL SUCCESS AND CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ The political success and cultural achievements of the Ottoman Empire during its zenith in the later 15th and 16th centuries matched

those of contemporary western Europe as well as the other two great Islamic states of Safavid Iran and Mughal India.

- ◆ For more than four centuries, the Porte was a most effective empire in its political, military, and administrative institutions. The Ottoman sultan and his servants at Constantinople ruled a diverse empire over three continents by co-opting local elites and respecting local religious and social institutions.
- ◆ The Ottoman Empire has often been hailed a perfect military state between Osman and Suleiman the Magnificent. The military balance steadily shifted against the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century, but the Porte tenaciously defended its empire for more than two centuries, from 1699 to 1918.
- ◆ The sultans Selim III and Mahmud II responded to crisis with military reforms, and the reformers of Tanzimat issued much more comprehensive reforms to preserve the empire. Foremost, the reformers of Tanzimat learned the art of European diplomacy, which had hitherto not been known and had not been needed.
- ◆ Mustafa Reşid Paşa, the architect of Tanzimat, negotiated an alliance with Great Britain and France that won a victory over tsarist Russia



David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain (1863–1945)

in the Crimean War and briefly promised a chance for the Ottoman Empire to enter the Concert of Europe.

- ◆ In 1878, at the Congress of Berlin, and again in 1913, under the Treaty of Constantinople, the Porte minimized or regained territorial losses by artful diplomacy.
- ◆ In World War I, the Ottoman Empire performed far above expectations when it had to fight an unequal war against the British and Russian Empires. Russia, not the Ottoman Empire, collapsed under the strain of modern war in 1917.
- ◆ The Kemalists, Balkan Muslim officers and officials committed to a new Turkish nationality and a new Turkish homeland in Anatolia, gained independence and avoided partition at the price of surrendering the Arab provinces.
- ◆ Yet the Ottoman heartland escaped partition by the victorious Entente Powers, and the Parliament in Ankara, still representing the Ottoman Empire, signed the Treaty of Lausanne, whereby the Ottoman Empire alone of the Central Powers rejected the treaty terms imposed by the Entente Allies.
- ◆ The cultural achievements of Ottoman civilization still endure and speak of a wealthy and sophisticated Islamic civilization.
- ◆ The great domed imperial mosques of Constantinople constructed between 1463 and 1665 represent the climax of Turkish religious architecture. Today, the skylines of the historic centers of the great cities of the Middle East are still marked by Ottoman or Ottoman-inspired architecture.
- ◆ The creation of the literary language of Turkish was a singularly brilliant linguistic achievement that made possible Ottoman poetry, history, and scholarly literature. In letters and visual arts, the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century represented an Islamic renaissance. The

elite Ottoman classes across the empire not only gave unity but set standards of mores and social decorum, and they popularized the beverage coffee.

- ◆ Finally, the crucial role of Islam cannot be overemphasized, for the madrassas trained the bureaucrats, the poets, and the theologians of the Porte. The sultan aimed to rule justly under *Şeriat*, and the members of the ulema preserved and transmitted a great religious and intellectual tradition.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways has the Ottoman legacy influenced the religious and political divisions in the Balkans and Middle East today? What lessons can be learned from the Ottoman system of the millet?
2. How have the successor states in the Balkans and the Arab world, and the Turkish Republic, perceive their Ottoman legacy? What were the most telling achievements of Ottoman civilization?

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